

Homework 2: Cryptanalysis

This homework is due **Friday, September 26, 2025 at 11:59 p.m.** and counts for 5% of your course grade. Late submissions will be penalized by 10% plus an additional 10% every 5 hours until received. Late work will not be accepted after 24 hours past the deadline. If you have a conflict due to travel, interviews, etc., please plan accordingly and turn in your homework early.

We encourage you to discuss the problems and your general approach with other students in the class. However, the answers you turn in must be your own original work, and you are bound by the Honor Code. Submit your solution on GradeScope following the instructions at the end of this document.

To solve these problems, you will probably want to write some short programs; submit them with your answers. We recommend Python, but you may use any common language or numerical package.

1. Here is some ciphertext that was produced by a simple substitution cipher that we learned about in class:

OBRGXIMYAZZAWCATBNMUYYHAZNVGFCXPVVSIIJSVLKIFAVGBIECAZSBWGRGRQWUCHMMOCYE
FLGQQNKFSHQMGYALNKCIJQVEKVWXNFOYFYQBESGOYTXMAYTXSISNBPMSSGOJBKFWRUTTML
BNQMLLRGFNZUAWHZLBRVZGHUVZMCKJEHSLSWGXCNZYEXRIMLPXRIXNUXRNSNRPHFDHBMAY
WKHTKNGNUXRNJUVGMYNYEYNLYGPGYFSBNQQWUCHMMSLRWTFDYQRNOJUEWNLVUZIDHWXLH
TLKNEXMALBRQGUMMGXCUFXLHTLLRLTROJYFIDHLIGADLUBVXENSCALVCDFFIQCFAHISILU
XXZXNUAMZAWISRNOJYKMQYECGRSBWHAHLUFBBPDPWLJBRYOCYEAYSVYXSI SPRKSNZYPHMM
WKHXMWWMGAZNEOFMDHKORMGOKNUHTAZQRAZPWBRQTQXGZFMJAXUTRNWCAPZLUFRODLFYFL
GUKHRODLTYRGYWHNLRIUCNMDXOCGAKIFAQXKUQMVGVZFDVLSIJSGADLWCFGNCFMGTMWWI
STBIMHGKXBSVPVGFVWHRYHNWXSNGHLEBNHYYPZLXUEXNHDSBGDQZIXGNQKNUXCCKUFMQI
MMRYEYUNFHEUDIAZVUJWNGQYSFVSDNZYFNOLWGRBLJGLGTMWWISKZJAXVMXCFVEBMAAHTB
SNGUPENMWCGBRIFFLHMYOBBBRNZIEHTAZFLTBMUVGSYVQVMGNZYROHFKISPZLOBBVZHLB
BKNOYBYRTHVYELSUFXGADJJISBSUTFRPZSGZPTQLQCAZHNGHGADMCCYEEODARGDLSFQHDM
FIGKZCKYNLDWGHQEDPQHRBSBWLKDBAMFNOJDSJTFIFMYHZXWXZHQYLBNGSQAWRHMWWQNK
HMYPEZLWXUXVCDFAHSQSMGXOLWWHTMLCZXHHOUVMHHYZBKQYAHSHQWWGRGSMFIEPHFDB
RMTLFBVLZLESOTBEXIEYQYKBFNOJDCRLAOLWEHRMWMGADYFYZZRZJIAMHYJQVMGIMNQXKU
QNUXUUDORHENAGRMGULCFUDCFANEHNLFRGTGYSXBYXIMLBIOIFYAMGUKWBNMNWXSHQGGLRM
GUFYVMGYJHHFDLAWNEROHYEBNLANLHQNZYABBYKNPTKWMFMNHIFMJBSBJYTTQXLIPLGAM
FTQCSN

Assume that encrypting with the key letter A results in no change, B results in an increment by one place in the alphabet, C results in an increment by two places, and so on.

What is the key? (Show your work.)

2. Briefly, what is “snakeoil cryptography”? How does it relate to the exercise above?
3. Here is a Python dictionary of the relative frequency of letters in English text:

```
{ "A": .08167, "B": .01492, "C": .02782, "D": .04253, "E": .12702, "F": .02228,
  "G": .02015, "H": .06094, "I": .06966, "J": .00153, "K": .00772, "L": .04025,
  "M": .02406, "N": .06749, "O": .07507, "P": .01929, "Q": .00095, "R": .05987,
  "S": .06327, "T": .09056, "U": .02758, "V": .00978, "W": .02360, "X": .00150,
  "Y": .01974, "Z": .00074 }
```

Here is some plaintext:

ethicslawanduniversitypolicieswarningtodefendasyouneedtobeabletot
hinklikeanattackerandthatincludesunderstandingtechniquesintherealworldmayviolate
ocompromiseseverythinghoweverusingthosetechniquesintherealworldmayviolate
thelawortheuniversitysrulesanditmaybeunethicalundersomecircumstancesev
enprobingforweaknessesmayresultinseverepenaltiesuptoandincludingexpuls
ioncivilfinesandjailtimeourpolicyineedsisthatyoumustrespecttheprivacya
ndpropertyrightsofothersatalltimesorelseyouwillfailthecourseactinglawf
ullyandethicallyisyourresponsibilitycarefullyreadthecomputerfraudandab
useactcfaaafederalstatutethatbroadlycriminalizescomputerintrusionthisi
soneofseveralawsthatgovernhackingunderstandwhatthelawprohibitsifindou
btwecanreferyoutoanattorneypleasereviewitsspoliciesonresponsibleuseoft
echnologyresourcesandcaenspolicydocumentsforguidelinesconcerningproper

The *population variance* of a finite population X of size N and mean μ is given by

$$\text{Var}(X) = \frac{1}{N} \sum_{i=1}^N (x_i - \mu)^2.$$

- (a) What is the population variance of the relative letter frequencies in English text?
- (b) What is the population variance of the relative letter frequencies in the given plaintext?
- (c) For each of the following keys — yz, xyz, wxyz, vwxyz, uvwxyz — encrypt the plaintext with a Vigenère cipher and the given key, then calculate and report the population variance of the relative letter frequencies in the resulting ciphertext. Describe and briefly explain the trend in this sequence of variances.
- (d) Viewing a Vigenère key of length k as a collection of k independent Caesar ciphers, calculate the mean of the frequency variances of the ciphertext for each one. (E.g., for key yz, calculate the frequency variance of the even numbered ciphertext characters and the frequency variance of the odd numbered ciphertext characters. Then take their mean.) Report the result for each key in part (c). Is the mean variance like those observed in part (b)? Part (c)? Briefly explain.
- (e) Consider the ciphertext that was produced with key uvwxyz. In part (d), you calculated the mean of six variances for this key. Revisit that ciphertext, and calculate the mean of the frequency variances that arise if you had assumed that the key had length 2, 3, 4, and 5. Does this suggest a variant to the Kasiski attack? (Don’t say no!) Briefly explain.

Submission Template

Please submit one pdf file to GradeScope, paginated per the specifications below: **HW2.pdf**. Failure to follow the provided formatting guidelines will result in an automatic **5%** deduction from your score. **Page 1** contains the answer and textual explanation of the process you used to derive your answer for Problem 1. **Page 2** contains similar information, but to Problem 2. **Page 3** contains similar information, but to Problem 3. Please use **pages 4 and beyond** to provide code and other required support details for your solutions to Problems 1 and 3. If you used the same code for both problems, please say so. If we can't read your file, we can't grade it. Make sure to comment your code with clear explanations and be sure to *cite any references used*.

Filename: HW2.pdf

Page 1: Problem 1

key=XXXXXXXXXX

brief description of your approach ...

<page break>

Page 2: Problem 2

briefly_answer_the_questions ...

<page break>

Page 3: Problem 3

part_a_var_english=0.0000000

part_b_var_plaintext=0.0000000

part_c_var_ciphertexts=[0.0000000, 0.0000000, 0.0000000, 0.0000000, 0.0000000]

part_c_explain="briefly_describe_and_explain_trend ..."

part_d_means=[0.0000000, 0.0000000, 0.0000000, 0.0000000, 0.0000000]

part_d_explain="briefly_compare_and_explain_results ..."

part_e_means=[0.0000000, 0.0000000, 0.0000000, 0.0000000]

part_e_explain="briefly_explain_attack_variant ..."

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Provide your code and detailed work here for Problems 1 and 3 ...