

YOUWEI ZHONG

PhD student at Yale University ◇ New Haven, US
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EDUCATION

Yale University

August 2025 – Present

PhD in Computer Science

Member of the **Rigorous Software Engineering (ROSE)** group led by Prof. Ruzica Piskac

Shanghai Jiao Tong University

September 2021 – June 2025

Undergraduate in Computer Science

Member of **John Hopcroft Class**, an elite CS program at Zhiyuan College, Shanghai Jiao Tong University, for top 10% of students, with a focus on **Theoretical Computer Science**.

PUBLICATION

A Parameterized Framework for the Formal Verification of Zero-Knowledge Virtual Machines

2024

Youwei Zhong (sole student author)

OOPSLA 2024

- Advised by Qinxiang Cao and Yuncong Hu
- **The Second Place Winner** in the Student Research Competition

MANUSCRIPTS

A Parameterized Verification Framework for the Constraint Generation Algorithms in Zero-Knowledge Virtual Machines

2025

Youwei Zhong, Zihan Xu, Haixing He, Yuncong Hu, Xiang Xie, Qinxiang Cao

- This paper is an extension work based on my OOPSLA 2024 SRC paper. We formalize the cryptographic security properties of zkVMs in the Coq proof assistant, including soundness, completeness, knowledge soundness, and zero-knowledge, by formalizing probabilistic programs using monads.

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

Rigorous Software Engineering (ROSE) group, Yale University

November 2024 - May 2025, Aug 2025 - Present

Research internship advised by Ruzica Piskac, Timos Antonopoulos and Ning Luo

New Haven, Connecticut, US

- Help design zero-knowledge protocols for domain specific problems, which can enable privacy-preserving auditing. (On-going)
- Developed automated tools to synthesize optimized R1CS circuits.

Programming Languages and Software Engineering (PLSE) group, University of California Santa Barbara / Riema Labs

March 2024 - October 2024

Research internship advised by Yu Feng and Yanju Chen, in collaboration with Ranjit Jhala

Remote

- Wrote bug detector prototypes by doing regular matching on the MIR of Rust programs used in Scroll zkEVM. Experimented on using LLMs to detect bugs in our benchmark.
- Developed bug finders for zero-knowledge virtual machines by synthesizing stub specifications with abstract interpretation to enable modular verification using the Flux refinement type checker
- Developed an analyzer that translates Circom programs into C programs, which uses the KLEE symbolic execution engine to detect unconstrained zero-knowledge circuits.

John Hopcroft Center, Shanghai Jiao Tong University
Research internship advised by Qinxiang Cao and Yuncong Hu

April 2023 - October 2024
Shanghai, China

- Developed a parameterized framework for the formal verification of zero-knowledge virtual machines, using the Coq proof assistant. Verified the parameterized constraint generation algorithm used by zero-knowledge virtual machines. Instantiated our parameterized framework on two examples: Cairo VM and a simplified zkEVM. (paper accepted by OOPSLA 2024 SRC, extension work in progress)
- Developed a DSL in Coq that provides a built-in field element type. Enabled symbolic execution and entailment generation in our DSL. Wrote an example of proving the correctness of a bit-decomposition program in our DSL.

ACADEMIC ACTIVITIES

OOPSLA/SPLASH 2024

Student Volunteer

October 2024
Pasadena, California, United States

- Attended the Programming Languages Mentoring Workshop (PLMW).
- Participated in the Student Research Competition and got the 2nd place in undergraduate category.

WORK EXPERIENCE

Minghong Investment

Quantitative Developer

January 2024 - February 2024
Shanghai, China

- Worked in developing a high frequency trading system.
- Updated C++ system interfaces based on the RDB database format.
- Processed data from different cryptocurrency exchanges.

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

CS1207, Programming and data structure - III, Shanghai Jiao Tong University

Teaching assistant

June 2023 – July 2023
Shanghai, China

- Prepared the code repository for the project of Ray Tracing in Rust. Wrote a detailed setup manual for the students.
- Designed the tasks of the project. Answered the questions of the students.

HONORS AND AWARDS

Yale Graduate Housing Community Fellow

start at May 2026

Timothy Dwight College Graduate Affiliate

October 2025 – Present

A-class Academic Excellence Scholarship

December 2024

The 2nd Place Winner in OOPSLA 2024 SRC (300 USD)

October 2024

Huawei Scholarship (10'000 yuan)

October 2023

Longfor Scholarship (10'000 yuan, 10 winners each year)

December 2022

Zhiyuan Honors Scholarship (5'000 yuan per year, Top 10%)

December 2024, 2023, 2022 and 2021

Three Good Student of Shanghai Jiao Tong University

October 2024, 2023 and 2022

MISCELLANEOUS

John Class Online

Maintainer

December 2021 – Present

- Designed an internal class forum based on Discourse, a well-known open source discussion platform.
- Maintained the operation of the Aliyun server and the website.

Zhiyuan College Debate Team

Captain

July 2021 – July 2022
Shanghai, China

- Organized the recruitment of the debate team. Produced recruiting WeChat pushes.
- Lead the preparation for Freshman Cup and Union Cup. Organized team building activities.

Monitor of Class F2103013

Monitor

September 2022 – now

Shanghai, China

- Organized team-building activities of Class F2103013
- Organized friendship-building activities across students in different years of John Hopcroft Class.

TECHNICAL SKILLS

Research Interests

Formal Verification, Zero-Knowledge Proof

Computer Languages

Coq, C, C++, Python, Rust

Machine Learning library

Pytorch, Scikit-learn

Tools

Git, VSCode