Abstract:
Many people use apps that routinely expose potentially private information to friends, family, coworkers, and even strangers. This talk will focus on the privacy risks and concerns arising from information that apps freely expose between typical users. I refer to this as interpersonal or “User-to-User (U2U)” privacy. In particular, I will discuss two relevant studies from my dissertation. First, I will describe how U2U privacy considerations arise in the context of online dating. Through a survey of 97 online dating users and follow-up interviews with 14 participants, we found a wide range of potential information leakage channels, user practices, and privacy expectations in this specific application class. For example, several online dating apps have Online Status Indicators (OSIs). These indicators can leak information such as a user’s daily schedule or changes to their romantic relationships. However, many apps besides online dating apps also have OSIs, which could leak different types of information to different audiences. In the second part of this talk, I will expand the discussion of U2U privacy issues beyond the specific context of online dating by focusing on OSIs in a variety of app genres. I will present a taxonomy of OSIs derived from analysis of 40 apps and the findings of a survey of 200 people that found that OSIs lead to app-dependent behaviors (i.e., when users contort their behavior to meet the demands of an app). A theme that has emerged as particularly relevant throughout my work is that many design choices affecting U2U privacy represent nuanced trade-offs between privacy and other user goals, privacy for one group of users versus another, or competing aspects of privacy. These findings reinforce the importance of incorporating all stakeholders in privacy-relevant design decisions and providing personalized options that enable users to manage their U2U privacy concerns and needs while accomplishing other goals they may have for using a system.

Bio:
Camille Cobb joined CyLab as a postdoctoral researcher in July 2019, where she is continuing to work on projects in usable security and privacy, with a particular focus on interpersonal aspects of privacy. She previously earned her PhD in the Security and Privacy Research Lab at the University of Washington. Camille received an NSF Graduate Research Fellowship in 2014. Her security and privacy work has also been supported by the UW Tech Policy Lab. Camille also has an MS in Computer Science & Engineering and Bachelors degrees in Physics and Computer Science.