

Math 2890, Games of Strategy: Contract Bridge I

Course Information

Fall 2019

Professor: Dr. Lisa Mantini, 410 Math Sciences

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- ◇ Instructor's office hours: TBA and by appointment.
- ♣ Course Times: M 4:00-5:15 PM in 422 MSCS.

Course Assistants: Two of our former students, Phillip Pergande and hopefully one other, will assist in class this semester.

Course Objectives: In this course we will learn the basics of the game Contract Bridge, one of the world's best and most difficult games of strategy, including:

- ♠ the nature of a trick-taking game and evaluating our hand;
- ♡ the *auction* phase, in which we use the bids we make as a language to describe the strength and shape of our hand and to decide on the final contract;
- ◇ the *declarer play* phase, in which we analyze the best way to take as many tricks as we committed to in the auction; and
- ♣ the *defense*, in which we try to prevent declarer from making his contract.

Bridge is suitable for a Math course because of the abstract nature of the bidding language, and because of the mental math and analysis necessary when making a plan for the play, as either the declarer or a defender. But Bridge also could be suitable as a Sociology course, for the study of its human interactions! (See the Honors offerings at the University of Kansas.)

Prerequisites: This class is open to Honors College students who are enrolled in any Math course at the level of Math 2144, Calculus I, or above.

Texts and supplies: Items which are required for students in the course are these:

- ♠ **Text:** *Bidding in the 21st Century*, by Audrey Grant and Betty Starzec, 1990, provided free by the American Contract Bridge League (ACBL) to students;
- ♡ **E-book:** *Learn to Play Bridge 1*, by Fred Gitelman, BridgeBase, Inc., 2005, for Windows computers. It is available on the lab computers in 421 MSCS and a zip file containing the executable file ltpb1setup.exe has been uploaded to Canvas.
- ◇ **Bridge cards:** for practice and play at home. We have decks for you to keep, provided by *Fun and Games Duplicate Bridge* in North Park Mall in OKC.
- ♣ **Membership** in the American Contract Bridge League is strongly recommended. An annual junior membership of \$5 for anyone under 26 will help pay for the books, computer program, and cards they are providing you. Join at acbl.org. It also provides you with a year-long subscription to their excellent magazine and the ability to join their online play organization, Bridge Base Online (bridgebase.com).

Course Format: In this course we meet once a week for 75 minutes. Class periods will consist of some instruction, generally either from a class handout or one of our texts, then play with some pre-set hands, followed by free play. On most weeks there will be a short assignment in Canvas to be done before the next class. On a few weeks there will be a slightly longer quiz, either in Canvas or to be done in class. Quizzes are generally done with open book. We will also have three major Game Days, played by partnership student pairs in the competitive style as duplicate bridge. Winning student pairs may win **Master Points**, the points awarded by the American Contract Bridge League to keep track of your developing proficiency at the game.

Course requirements: Bridge is a game played by groups of four people, so your class attendance and active participation is paramount. You are also required to treat all other students in the class with friendliness and respect. Your course grade is based primarily on your attendance and active participation, not on your skill at the game! A total of 200 points are available, distributed as follows. Earning 90% of the available points guarantees the grade of A, and 80% guarantees a B.

Item	Points	Total
Attendance on 12 non-game days	5 points	60 points
Homework and quizzes	5–20 points	75 points
Halloween Game Day, October 28	20 points	20 points
Thanksgiving Game Day, November 25	20 points	20 points
Final Game Day, December 9, 6:00–7:50 PM	25 points	25 points
Total		200 points

Attendance and Cell Phones: You jeopardize your attendance points on any given class period if I see that you are using your cell phone, laptop, or other electronic device during class.

Major Dates: Dates for the major course events are as follows:

- ♠ Quizzes are tentatively scheduled for the weeks of **September 30, October 21, and November 18**. If done in class, quizzes are collaborative and done with open book; if done online, there will be some embedded hints.
- ♡ Halloween Game Day 1: **October 28**. This is a partnership duplicate game. You may wear costumes. There will be Halloween candy as prizes.
- ◇ Thanksgiving Game Day 2: **November 25**. This is also a partnership duplicate game. No turkey will be served, but we can talk about pumpkin pie.
- ♣ Final Game Day 3: **December 9, 6:00–7:50 PM** (note time change), during our final exam period.

ACBL and Master Points: As I am a certified bridge instructor, I am permitted to award master points for student games which follow ACBL guidelines. Students who wish to continue playing duplicate bridge and keep their master points will need to join the ACBL. The membership dues for students are \$5 per year, for as long as you are 25 years old or younger.