

Math 2890, Contract Bridge I

Course Information

Fall 2020

Professor: Dr. Lisa Mantini, 410 Math Sciences

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- ♦ Instructor's office hours: by appointment via zoom or other online conference.
- ♣ Course Times: M 4:00-5:15 PM online.

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 (bidding), 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, the analysis necessary when making a plan for the play, as either the declarer or a defender, and the counting you need to do to keep track of cards played! But Bridge also involves a bit of psychology and other factors, as we'll see.

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, either in paperback (available outside my office) or as a pdf scan in canvas;
- ♥ **Online playing platform:** All students will need an account on Bridge Base Online, bridgebase.com. This account is free unless you want to play in certain tournaments. Please make your username something closely related to your real name (first or last) enough that I'll be able to tell who you are. "Mountainbiker-dude" won't help me. You'll also need to accept my invitation to use our Discord server for our audio channel during play.
- ♦ **Bridge cards:** for practice and play at home. We have decks for you to keep, provided by *Fun and Games Duplicate Bridge* in OKC. Notice that they are narrower than poker cards, to make it easier to hold 13 of them in your hand at one time. They are outside my office.
- ♣ **Instructional Cards:** We will use pre-set hands in an instructional deck to illustrate some bridge ideas while we are learning. Please borrow one of these decks, outside my office. They are in a green box. I'll explain how we use them in class. I'd appreciate your returning these at the end of the semester.

Course Format: In this course we meet once a week for 75 minutes online. Class periods will be a blend of instruction, discussion, playing pre-set instructional hands, and free play. The faster we get through the instruction, the more free play there will be! We will use bridgebase.com for our playing platform and will use a Discord server for our audio channel. I am hoping that you will have enough background to play on bridgebase by mid-October, but feel free to try it by yourselves at any time.

Course requirements: Bridge is a game played by groups of four people, so your participation in our online class periods is important! Each regular week will be worth 10 points towards your grade, split between (i) a brief reading assignment with a Canvas quiz, to teach bidding and play essentials, and (ii) participation in our Monday online sessions. There will be two take-home, open-book quizzes (discussion allowed). There will also be two special game days, the Halloween Game on October 26 and the Final Game on December 7. Special games are worth a higher score. 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
♠ Weekly score, regular weeks	10 points	130 points
♡ Take-home Quizzes, Oct 11 & Nov 30	20 points	40 points
◇ Halloween Game Day, October 26	15 points	15 points
♣ Final Game Day, December 7, 6:00–7:50 PM	15 points	15 points
♠♡ Total ◇♣		200 points

Attendance: Since bridge is played by four people at a table, and there are 20 people enrolled in this class, your weekly attendance at our online sessions is important. Please let me know in advance, if possible, if you must be absent. I will have to arrange a substitute, a former bridge student, to play in your place. If you cannot attend a session, a substitute online quiz in canvas will give you the opportunity to earn any missing points.

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

- ♠ Quizzes are tentatively scheduled to be due on **October 11** and **November 30**. They will be done on canvas, and are open-book with discussion allowed. The point is for you to learn the rules of the game!
- ♡ Introduction to BBO: I hope to have us start playing bridge on the online platform on BBO (bridgebase.com) no later than **October 12**.
- ◇ Halloween Game Day 1: **October 26**. This is a partnership game. If I can get permission to host a larger game on BBO by then, we'll have a tournament.
- ♣ Final Game Day 2: **December 7, 6:00–7:50 PM** (note time change), during our final exam period. Again, this will be an online tournament, if feasible.

Tentative Class Calendar: A rough schedule of topics follows. This may be adjusted based on what we finish each week.

Week	Date	Topic
1	Aug 17	Course introduction, tricks, trumps, mechanics
2	Aug 24	Chapter 1: scoring, sample hands, point count
3	Aug 31	Play techniques: promotion, developing long suits
	Sep 7	<i>NO CLASS, LABOR DAY HOLIDAY</i>
4	Sep 14	Play techniques: the finesse, and ruffing
5	Sep 21	Chapter 2: The opening bid
6	Sep 28	Chapter 3: Responses to 1NT openers
7	Oct 5	Chapter 4: Responses to opening bids of 1 in a suit
8	Oct 12	Chapters 5 and 6: Rebids I
9	Oct 19	Chapter 7: Overcalls
10	Oct 26	Halloween Game Day
11	Nov 2	Chapters 5 and 6: More on rebids
12	Nov 9	Chapter 8: The Take-Out Double
13	Nov 16	Planning the play
	Nov 23	<i>NO CLASS, THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY</i>
14	Nov 30	Advanced bids, wrap-up and review
15	Dec 7	Final Game Day, 6:00–7:50 PM