

Math 2890, Contract Bridge I

Course Information

Fall 2021

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 in 115 MSCS (first floor in MSCS).

Course Assistants: Two former students, Nathan Johns (nathan.johns@okstate.edu) and Murray Powers (mupower@ostatemail.okstate.edu), 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. 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. Our topics include:

- ♠ 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.

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 in class) or as a pdf scan in canvas;
- ♡ **Bridge cards:** We have ordered a set of two decks for you as a course supply, available at the bookstore (bridge cards are a bit smaller than poker cards and come in boxed sets of two decks).
- ◇ **Online playing platform:** We'll likely need everyone to have a membership in both the American Contract Bridge League and one of its online playing platforms before the end of the semester. We'll let you know.
- ♣ **Masks:** As you know, with the surge in covid cases due to the delta variant, OSU is encouraging the wearing of masks indoors in classrooms and other public settings, whether or not you are vaccinated against covid-19. This is especially important in a collaborative course like this one, because people are sitting at a table together for long periods of time. Wearing a mask during class not only

protects you but also helps protect those around you who may be more vulnerable. This is a simple way we can look out for all members of the Cowboy family. If you feel sick, do not attend class, and email me as soon as possible to notify me of your absence so that we can have one of our TA's sub for you. Contact University Health Services at 405-744-7665 immediately and communicate with me as soon as possible about any work you miss.

Course Format: In this course we meet once a week for 75 minutes. 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!

Course requirements: Bridge is a game played by groups of four people, so your participation in our class periods, as long as you are healthy, is important! Each regular week will be worth 10 points towards your grade, split between (i) class participation (or a substitute assignment on canvas for any who are ill), and (ii) weekly assignments on canvas. There will be two open-book quizzes (discussion allowed). There will also be three special game days, the Halloween Game on October 25, the Thanksgiving Game Day on November 15, and the Final Game on December 6. Special games are worth a higher score. A total of 200 points are available, distributed as follows. Earning 90% of the available points guarantees an A, and 80% guarantees a B.

Item	Points	Total
♠ Weekly score, regular weeks	10 points	120 points
♡ Quizzes, Oct 18 & Nov 8	15 points	30 points
◇ Mid-term Game Days, Oct 25 & Nov 15	15 points	30 points
♣ Final Game Day, December 6, 6:00–7:50 PM	20 points	20 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 class sessions, as long as you are healthy, is important. Please let me know in advance, if possible, if you must be absent so that we can arrange a sub. For class sessions that you must miss, you may earn any missing points by completing a substitute online assignment in canvas.

Seating Chart: The University is mandating that we form a seating chart for each class this semester, to help with contact tracing in case of illness. To do that, I'll want the class to be sorted into five groups, Tables 1–5. I've opened up those groups on the canvas page called People, on the "Tables" tab. You may contact each other over the weekend to sign up for the tables where you want to sit, or we can complete this during our first class. After that, you'll sit at your assigned table.

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

- ♠ Quizzes are tentatively scheduled to be due on **October 18** and **November 8**. They are open-book quizzes, also open for discussion with others at your table, serving as a review of the past several weeks of instruction.

♡ Halloween Game Day 1: **October 25.**

◇ Thanksgiving Game Day 2: **November 15.**

♣ Final Game Day 3: **December 6, 6:00–7:50 PM** (note time change), during our final exam period. This may be a joint game day with Dr. Mermin's class. So we have to prepare carefully, so we can beat them.

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 16	Course introduction, tricks, trumps, mechanics of play, scoring
2	Aug 23	Hand valuation, counting winners and losers, promotion
3	Aug 30	Suit splits, establishing long suits, drawing trump, the finesse, ruffing
	Sep 6	<i>NO CLASS, LABOR DAY HOLIDAY</i>
4	Sep 13	Counting losers, discarding losers, the opening bid
5	Sep 20	No Trump opening bids and responses
6	Sep 27	Responses to suit opening bids
7	Oct 4	More on suit opening bids and the bidding dialog
8	Oct 11	More on the bidding dialog
9	Oct 18	Competitive bidding: the overall and the penalty double
10	Oct 25	Halloween Game Day
11	Nov 1	Competitive bidding: the takeout double and responses
12	Nov 8	Strong and weak opening bids
13	Nov 15	Thanksgiving Game Day
	Nov 22	<i>NO CLASS, THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY</i>
14	Nov 29	Wrap-up and review
15	Dec 6	Final Game Day, 6:00–7:50 PM

Tentative Practice Play: We have reserved our classroom, 115 MSCS, for practice play on **Thursdays from 4:30–7:30 PM**. Dr. Mantini will be available from 4:30–5:30 PM and Dr. Mermin will be available from 6:30–7:30 PM.