Honors 191: Bridge: game of games

Fall 2019

Instructor: Dr. Anya Butt   anya.butt@central.edu
Office hours: M 2-3, WF 10-12, R 1-3
Days/times/location: W 7-9 pm

No matter where I go, I always make friends at the bridge table – Martina Navratilova

Description: Bridge is a card game focused on cooperation and communication, within a constrained setting. It has been described as the ultimate in intellectual competition. This course will be divided into two sections: learning the game of bridge, along with modern day conventions to allow one to be competitive at duplicate or contract bridge, and understanding the impact of bridge in modern societies through readings and discussion. We will discuss the evolution of cards and card games, mathematical principles, game theory in settings with incomplete information, and communication strategies. We will also examine the impacts of bridge on society, including its evolution, its global reach, its recreational aspects (as well as explore literature based around bridge) and the business side of bridge. Finally, we will examine the psychological benefits of bridge and its community building aspects.

Overall, I am generally more than delighted to talk/email with students, so anytime you have a question, would like something clarified or need other help, feel free to contact me either in person during office hours, by phone or by email anytime.

Outcomes for the students:

- Become proficient bridge players; gain a life-long learning pursuit
  - Learn history, conventions, terminology of modern bridge
  - (related to the objective “make students aware of programs that engage their individual gifts and talents”)
- Improve cognitive capabilities and critical analysis
  - (related to the objective “promote academic excellence”)
- Engage in community and cooperation building exercises
  - (related to the objective “foster mentoring relationships between students and faculty”)
- Learn to communicate clearly with a partner
- Improve understanding of mathematical probabilities

Other readings as assigned
Bridge textbooks available in the bridge room

Assessment:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Written analysis of a bridge hands</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bridge biography of a bridge player</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Attendance/Participation/Discussion of assigned readings during course</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participation in off-campus service learning activity</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation in 3 CBO sanctioned tournament at end of semester</td>
<td>12%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final reflection paper</td>
<td>28%</td>
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</tbody>
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Blackboard explained: Throughout the semester, I will be posting grades on blackboard. The Blackboard site for this course is set to include all the work of the course in the weighted column grade. Thus, early in the semester it may seem like you have a low grade, but that is because essentially only a few of the percentage points have been awarded (each lab is approximately 2 %). Think of it like a staircase. You start at the bottom and everything you do and hand it earns you percentage points towards your final grade.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Meeting dates</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Reading</th>
<th>Bridge lessons</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Aug 28</td>
<td>Introduction to class, history of cards/evolution of cards</td>
<td>Sacher, 1-124, Scott 1991</td>
<td>Whist, Bridge Basics</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Sept 4</td>
<td>History/evolution of bridge</td>
<td>Sacher, 125-219</td>
<td>No-trump and responses</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Sept 18</td>
<td>Game theory, Trust/competition in game playing</td>
<td>Sacher, 220-336</td>
<td>Minor bids and responses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Sept 25</td>
<td>Communicating within a limited environment</td>
<td>Amit and Markovitch; Gamback et al</td>
<td>Preemptive bidding/Weak 2s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Oct 2</td>
<td>Codes of behavior</td>
<td>Readings on ethics online</td>
<td>Overcalls, competitive auctions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Oct 9</td>
<td>Bridge as recreation</td>
<td>Scott and Godbey; Cochran</td>
<td>Planning your hand, developing tricks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Oct 16</td>
<td>Bridge as a community builder</td>
<td>Balint et al, 2011</td>
<td>Finessing, trumping and discarding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Oct 23</td>
<td>Bridge in the digital environment</td>
<td>Simons, 2006</td>
<td>Strong openers: 2C, 2NT</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Oct 30 (Nevada Day!)</td>
<td>Bridge and its role in memory and cognition</td>
<td>Ashworth et al,</td>
<td>Conventions: Slam bidding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Nov 6</td>
<td>Bridge as a business</td>
<td>Clarkson-Smith and Hartley; Charness</td>
<td>Opening leads, defensive play</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>Nov 13</td>
<td>Convention cards</td>
<td>Frank and Basin; Frank et al</td>
<td>Tournament play</td>
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<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Nov 20</td>
<td>Cryptology in bridge</td>
<td>Winkler, Simons</td>
<td>Conventions: Stayman</td>
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<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Dec 4</td>
<td>Bridge across the world</td>
<td>Vocabulary handouts</td>
<td>Conventions: Jacoby transfers</td>
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<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Dec 11</td>
<td>Bridge in the news</td>
<td>Cowan, 1987</td>
<td>Leads</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Final</td>
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**Course policies:**
- Assigned reading is to be done prior to class or lab.
- Exams cover all the material from reading assignments, lectures, and labs.
- The final exam will be **comprehensive**, including information covered during the entire semester, emphasizing the last part.
- No make up exams, except with special permission and excused absence.
- Cell phones that ring during class tend to be confiscated. Remember to turn them off beforehand.

**Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated.** Please consult the catalog for the relevant policies. Do your own work and reference anything that is not your own.

**Notification of Participation in College Sanctioned Events:** Mock Trial participants, choir tour participants, athletes, and others who must miss a class for participating in a college sanctioned event are expected to notify me in advance and complete work including tests in advance of the absence (at least 48 hours). It is the student’s responsibility to communicate with me in advance regarding their absences and determine a schedule for make up work. It is also your responsibility to be aware of the Central College policy that excused absences for such events should be held to 10% of the course meetings, with 15% as an absolute maximum (representing 4-6 class periods). Remember – some experiences and events CANNOT be made up, even with an excused absence, and it is your responsibility to plan accordingly. Missing class, even with an excused absence puts you at a disadvantage, as you will have missed time and content.

Central College abides by interpretations of the **Americans with Disabilities Act** and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 that stipulates no student shall be denied the benefits of an education "solely by reason of a handicap." Disabilities covered by law include, but are not limited to, learning disabilities, hearing, sight, or mobility impairments, and other health related impairments. If you have a documented disability that may have some impact on your work in this class for which you may require accommodations, please see me and Nancy Kroese, Director of Student Support Services and Disabilities Services Coordinator, (x 5247) during the first two weeks of the semester so that such accommodations may be arranged.

**Plagiarism** and cheating of any form are serious offenses and may result in an F for the assignment, the course, or expulsion from the college. The details of Central's Academic Integrity policy are found in the Student Handbook, on the web. A copy will be sent to you via e-mail during the first week of the semester. It is **your** responsibility to read and understand the contents of that policy before you submit work to be graded. Questions regarding the policies and enforcement of the policies may be addressed to me during class or during office hours.
Bibliography (ie, citations for the readings):
Ashworth, R., S. Punch and C. Small, A review of possible interventions into healthy ageing and cognitive stimulation: exploring the links between bridge and dementia.

Bridge lessons are from the ACBL Bridge Series and Audrey Grant’s Bridge Basics. A copy of these texts are in the bridge room.
Hand analysis

You will each be given a dealt-out hand. Your assignment is to provide your analysis of the hand and present your reasoning. Your assignment should be written up with an explanation for the bidding, as well as comments on the play.

I would like you to explain how the bidding would go. Make sure you explain your reasoning. What are you telling your partner with each bid?

Make sure you consider the plan your declarer should be pursuing. Where are the sure tricks? What tricks need to be developed? How will you develop those? Be explicit on that in your write up.

What is your opening lead and why?

Why are you leading out certain cards? Why are you discarding the cards you are discarding? Some discards may be obvious, as when players follow suit, so those don’t need to be commented on. Similarly, if the defender has to make choices as to which cards to save or play; what is their reasoning?

Make sure you are playing in the best interests of both North-South and East-West. Some of these hands will make the contract that you end up bidding, some will be set.

What I am looking for in this assignment is your critical reasoning skills, as well as your bridge knowledge. Make sure you explain the choices you made in your analysis to help me see and understand those aspects. Feel free to also comment on any tricky aspects of the hand that made you think about how to bid/play the contract.

The whole assignment should be typed up (ca. 2 pages) and submitted digitally, along with the hand that you were assigned.
Bridge Biography

Your assignment is to engage a bridge player in conversation and learn about their history with bridge. I have often found that bridge is a good way to make connections with individuals. And since while playing bridge, you are constrained in your conversation to topics that do not reveal unauthorized information about your hands, it is a good time to talk about other things.

During your conversation, explore the individual’s history with bridge. You will write up your conversation as a biography, focusing on their relationship with bridge.

For your assignment, I expect you to provide an introduction: who were you talking to, when and where. You should also provide some background on the individual: age, where they are from and other basic facts that may be pertinent about the individual.

Topics you should also cover:
- The beginnings of their relationship with bridge: When did the individual start playing bridge? Why? How did they learn to play bridge?
- Their history with bridge: How regularly do they play bridge nowadays? What has been their history in playing bridge over time/how regularly have they played in the past? What type of bridge do they play?
- Their social relationships in bridge: Do they have a regular bridge partner? What kind of groups do they play in?
- Their evolution as a bridge player: do they think they have evolved as a player? What changes have occurred in their game? How did they come about?
- Their memories of bridge: were there any memorable hands they recall? Any major triumphs or errors that have stuck with them? Do they have favorite memories of bridge moments?
- Their assessment of bridge: how has bridge impacted their lives? What are some of the benefits they perceive? Are there any drawbacks?

Feel free to explore any topic in greater depth or see what else you can discover. I’ve met some fascinating people playing bridge (for that matter, my old bridge partner in Reno once found herself playing against Bill Gates, so that’s a story).

Finally, make sure you end with a conclusion that reflects on your interactions with the individual and your takeaways from it (reflection is always good for the soul).

I expect you to type up this assignment in prose, in a manner that doesn’t just list facts, but actually makes the biography a compelling read. There is no suggested page length on the assignment – it will end up being as long as it needs to be. Obviously, one page will likely be too short and twenty pages will likely be way too much.