

Introduction to Chess Syllabus

Course Facilitators:

Course Email decal@fianchesso.org

Henry Mak henry@fianchesso.org

Carson Li carson@fianchesso.org

Allan Chao director@fianchesso.org

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Math 98/198, 2 units

Wednesday 6 – 8 PM

CCNs TBA in class

Location: 101 Morgan

Course description

FianCHESSo is a course designed for anyone interested in chess, at any level of skill. The course design allows all students to improve from whatever level they are at, but is mostly directed to those who are of beginning or intermediate level. Each class period is composed of one hour of instruction followed by students playing in open or small tournament games. Due to the nature of chess, the instructional sessions are strongly student led. For example, in weeks 7-8, the students will vote for a famous game (eg. Kasparov vs. Deep Blue), and will together analyze each move of the game, in order to understand the underlying reasoning of each player.

The course is modeled after a particular chess move, called the “fianchetto.” The fianchetto is a highly accelerated, very powerful move that great chess players love due to its lightning speed and extensive scope. This course, in fifteen weeks, covers a similarly broad scope of chess and many of its lesser-known aspects, and does so at a “fianchetto” pace.

Course learning objectives

There are several objectives of this course.

In all, the primary goal is for students to learn and enjoy the art of chess.

In the end, students will demonstrate mastery of:

- Rules:
 - Basic rules, including set up and movement of pieces
 - Advanced rules, including use of chess-clocks and notation.
- Strategy:
 - Basics tactics like forks, pins, skewers, double-attacks, and discoveries
 - Material vs Position analysis, including sacrifices
- Opening Analysis:
 - Center control, development, safety vs. aggressiveness
 - King Pawn Openings and Responses: French, Pirc, Ruy Lopez, Sicilian
- Endgames:
 - King position generalities, Pawn endgames
 - Specific endgames (King Rook vs King)
- Analysis of a Famous Game: (Opening, Mid-game, Endgame)
 - Immortal Game and Evergreen Game
 - Student Chosen Game (eg. Opera game, Kasparov vs Karpov, vs Deep Blue, vs World)
- Variations of Chess
 - Western Chess Set: Fischer Random, Atomic, Losers, Crazyhouse, Monster
 - Abnormal Sets: Omega/Capablanca chess, 3-Dimensional chess, 3-4 Player chess, Bughouse
 - Other Chess Sets: Chinese Chess, Shogi, Go

Students will also be able to analyze chess using standard terminology.

By writing the essays, students will also learn the history and chess and its influence on society, and will explore how chess relates to their lives, both now and in the future.

Required text

There will be a required reader, available in both printed and pdf format (distributed weekly through email). The reader will closely follow the schedule of the class, so students can follow along in their own homes. Also, several practice exercises will accompany the instruction in the reader, which students are required to do. Also, some handouts will be distributed in class, which can also be received by email if the students prefer.

Supplemental Materials

Searching for Bobby Fischer – A moving film that follows a chess prodigy through his chess career
We might watch this movie for the last class.

Also, students are encouraged to register for a free online chess server. There are several of these free servers, including Yahoo and MSN. Another option is to download NetBlitz, a freeware computer chess program that students can use to play each other.

Evaluation procedures

- **Students must attend at least 13 of the 15 classes. (300 Points Total)**
- **Students must complete the packet (200 Points Total)**
- **Students must notate at least one game per session and one per week as homework.
(Totals to about 30 games by the end of the class) (300 Points Total)**
- **Students must write at least three of four written assignments (2-3 pages long, doubles spaced), on the following topics: * More information detailing the topic of each written assignment will be sent out later. (200 Points Total)**

- History of Chess: Discuss the history of chess (origins, piece/move names, notation), and famous games, and perspective of chess in media. What is the influence of chess on society?
- A Game Analysis: Analyze and discuss one of your own chess games, why it is interesting to you, and what you can learn from that game. Point out important positions and why they're significant.
- Chess Variations: Pick a favorite variation, discuss why you enjoy it, and how it might improve your chess play. // OR // Make up your own variation of chess, discuss the rules, and how it might improve your chess play.
- Chess and Life: What is the significance of chess in your life? What is chess's personal meaning to you? Also, discuss your future with chess. // OR // Which chess piece are you most like? Why?

Total 1000 Points

Additional policies

Each lesson begins with a basic topic of chess. The instructional period is a review of the reading material. That usually takes ~1 hour. After that, students break up into pairs and practice the newly learned concepts by playing chess, while the facilitator circles the room and goes through the chess thinking process with each student.

Chess Sets and Notation Books are required.

The homework each week is usually to play and notate at least one game of chess, read the assigned reading, and write occasional short essays. This amounts to about 2-3 hours per week.

Students participate by voicing their move suggestions and ideas during the instruction, and by practicing with others. All written work (exercises, notated games, packet, and written assignments) is due at the latest by the 14th class, as the 15th class is intended as a relaxed, enjoyable day of chess fun.

Course Outline

Week	Date	Topic	Reading due	Written assignment due
1	01/28/09	Rules of Chess: Set up, movement, notation, clocks		
2	02/04/09	Midgame Basics: Fork, skewer, pin, discoveries	Rules and Midgame Basics	
3	02/11/09	Midgame Continued: Material vs Position, intermezzo moves, sacrifices	Midgame Continued	
4	02/18/09	Opening Generalities: Center control, development, safety vs aggressiveness, pawn structure	Opening Analysis 1	
5	02/25/09	Opening Specifics: King Pawn: French, Pirc, Sicilian, Ruy Lopez	Opening Analysis 2	History of Chess†
6	03/04/09	Endgames: Back-rank, Rooks, avoid Stalemate, opposition	Endgames	
7	03/11/09	Analysis of Famous Games: Immortal game, Evergreen game	Immortal Game, Evergreen Game	
8	03/18/09	Analysis of a Famous Game: Student chosen game	Chosen Famous Game	Game Analysis*
9	03/25/09	Spring Recess!	Spring Recess!	
10	04/01/09	Variations I (FIDE board): Chess960, Atomic, Losers, Crazyhouse, Monster	Variations I Rules and Concepts	
11	04/08/09	Variations II (abnormal board): Omega, 3-Dimensional, 3/4-player, Bughouse	Variations II Rules and Concepts	Chess Variations†
12	04/15/09	The Fianchetto: Hypermodern openings, Sicilian "Dragon Bishop"	The Fianchetto	
13	04/22/09	In-Class Tournament Day 1 Blindfold / Simul	Chess Puzzles	
14	04/29/09	In-Class Tournament Day 2 Blitz	Chess and Life	Chess and Life*
15	05/06/09	Fun Day: (optional) Field Trip to San Francisco Chess or "Searching for Bobby Fischer"		

***Mandatory essays**

†History of Chess or Game Variation: Pick one to do.