

Go

continued from page 1

students can now take a class in Go. Next term, Duff is teaching the AAA 407/507 seminar Go: Theory and Practice. Students can earn one to three credits depending on involvement.

Duff has been a Go enthusiast since his junior high days, and he said he wanted to bring that joy and skill to the lives of others.

"I love the game and doing stuff for students," he said.

While Go is still taking off in the United States, it has been part of Asian culture for nearly 4,000 years. Some may recognize Go

from the recent movie "A Beautiful Mind," in which graduate students play the game. It has been called one of the major Asian art forms, in the family of painting, calligraphy and architecture. In the middle ages, Japanese shoguns played Go, and it also earned the support of nobility.

Today, Go is an international fa-

vorite in the Internet gaming community. The game is a match-up of wits and aggression, as players aim to surround their opponent's stones while also leaving themselves an out, or what the game calls a "liberty," at all times.

To play, black and white stones are placed strategically one at a time on a wooden board. An official-size board measures 19 inches by 19 inches, though learners start with a 9-by-9 board. Prices for the boards alone range from \$7 to \$70 depending on the quality. Higher-scale stones are made out of clam (white) and slate (black), with boards made from a nutmeg tree.

Although mastering the art of Go is a challenge, once the fundamentals are taught, it is simply a matter of practice.

"You can learn on a basic level very quickly, akin to studying a language," Duff said.

A game of Go begins with the placement of a black stone on the board. Because the first move sets the direction of play and black always starts, the player of white stones gets an advance in points, called a "Komi." The amount of the Komi depends on the set of rules you play by: Chinese, Japanese, or Ing.

Duff said most Americans play by the Ing style, named after a Taiwanese businessman who offered \$1 million to the first country to adopt his rules of play. America readily accepted the offer.

The money went to the American Go Association, which then pledged to match dollar for dollar whatever clubs spend to attend Go tournaments.

The game comes down to crunch time when there is an "Atari," and only one move left until the player loses. One false move can mean the end if the player can't make any more profitable moves.

To score, points are counted by open spaces remaining. Whoever has the most, wins. In professional games, Duff said there is usually not more than a 10-point difference.

Most amateur games last one hour, but games in professional tournaments can demand an eight-to-10-hour time commitment.

Although turnout at weekly University Go meetings varies, Duff said on average about 22 people attend. The group was just recognized by the American Go Association and is looking to attend a local tournament. There are cur-

University of Oregon Go Club

Meets 7 p.m. every Monday in the Hearth Cafe, 266 Lawrence

Go: Theory and Practice, AAA 407/507

Instructor: Stephen Duff

AAA 407 CRN 35934

AAA 507 CRN 35935

7-10 p.m. Mondays in 266 Lawrence Pass/No Pass

rently three Oregon tournaments and numerous others worldwide. In top-ranking face-offs, the winner can go home with as much as \$400,000.

Duff said while Go may be seen as just a game, for many, it has a deeper meaning.

"Go has a rambling order like nature, with the repetition of angles and harmony of forces in the environment," he said. "It has a very profound structure underneath." He added that in Korea, where the University of Korea has an entire department dedicated to Go, there is a huge school movement to teach children Go because it enforces "discipline, pattern and order."

"This is the only game computers cannot master because there is too much to it," member Jacob Henner said. "You can't just brute force your way through it."

"I like the fact that it goes beyond the possibility of the single mind to capture the whole game," graduate student John Carter added.

This challenge is just what keeps players hooked. Acres, Class of '00, admitted that while he was a student Go actually took the place of education in his life for a term.

"I had been playing Go about nine months and wanted to see how many classes I could take pass/no pass so I could have more spare time to play Go," he said.

Others see Go from more of a philosophical standpoint.

"Go is very good for brain activity and mental health," visiting scholar Dong Jin Son said. "Go is the same as life; every stone is an alternative, but I have to choose one, and then something is different."

Go Club meetings are open to anyone, and are held at 7 p.m. Mondays in the Hearth Cafe, 266 Lawrence Hall.

E-mail reporter Robin Weber at robinweber@dailymerald.com.

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