

# Sin Cities

History 303  
Anton Rosenthal

Fall 2009  
University of Kansas

Cities may be the most important human invention. This course will offer a comparative global introduction to the history of the modern city by looking at the ways in which certain metropolises developed an attractive underbelly of decadence at the same time as they sought to be centers of a vibrant cosmopolitan life. In the process, different social groups pushed for order or chaos in the city, sometimes with catastrophic consequences. In order to assess the nature of this core tension, we will examine the changing roles played by popular culture, gambling, prostitution, crime, violence, nightlife, tourism and corruption in the life of the modern city, in some cases going back to the late 19<sup>th</sup> century to trace social developments.

The course is organized around six case studies drawn from across the world and set in different eras—Berlin, Las Vegas, Paris, Los Angeles, Shanghai and Havana. We will approach these cities through a wide range of sources including journalistic reportage, travel accounts, fiction, photography, music and film, in addition to secondary historical interpretations. Each of these cities at some point cultivated a reputation as an open city in which taboos could be broken, unconventional behavior was tolerated, lives were reinvented and fortunes were made and lost overnight. Because of the importance of this reputation to the history, growth and culture of the city, the representations of cities constructed through different media will be a central focus of the course.

We will explore a variety of themes that are important to understanding the history of the modern city: spectacle and consumerism; urban space and the struggle for order; time of day and public behavior; the changing relationship between work and leisure; the social effects of war and revolution on the city; the rise of tourism; and the battle between cosmopolitanism and anti-urbanism. In investigating these topics, we will make brief forays into a secondary set of cities that includes Kansas City, Chicago, Algiers, and New Orleans.

## **Course Goals**

1. To have students develop an appreciation for the central role that cities played in shaping modern societies across the globe.
2. To have students develop new perspectives on urban change and social tensions by engaging in critical analysis of contested spaces in the city and representations of the city.
3. To introduce students to the comparative method of historical analysis.
4. To improve the writing skills of students, including the overall presentation of their work.
5. To improve the visual literacy of students.

**Texts**

You are responsible for purchasing the texts listed below. Do not count on local bookstores to have copies of them, since the local textbook stores do not usually order enough books for everyone enrolled in a course. You may wish to order your books through an internet source such as Powell's Books or the Chicago Seminary Book Co-op or obtain them through a general bookstore. They have also been placed on one-day reserve in Watson Library.

Mayra Montero, **Dancing to "Almendra"** (Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 2005)

David Clay Large, **Berlin** (Basic Books, 2000)

Stella Dong, **Shanghai 1842-1949: The Rise and Fall of a Decadent City**  
(Morrow, 2000)

Marc Cooper, **The Last Honest Place in America: Paradise and Perdition in the New Las Vegas** (Nation Books, 2004)

**Additional short readings on Blackboard or distributed as handouts will be announced from time to time during the semester. Reading in addition to the course texts will be required to complete the writing assignments.**

**Grading**

Cityscape Essay	70 points	Due September 22
Proposal for Research Project	30 points	Due October 6
Midterm Exam	60 points	October 22—in class
Comparative Research Project	100 points	Due November 19
Final Exam	90 points	Thursday, December 17, 1:30-4:00 pm—in class
Quizzes/Participation	<u>50 points</u>	
Total	400 points	

The Midterm and Final Exams will consist of a mix of identification questions and essay questions.

A plus/minus grading scheme will be used in this class according to an overall percentage of the possible points. As a model,

88-89.9%= B+

82-87.9%= B

80-81.9%= B-

**Quizzes**

Unannounced quizzes will be given from time to time in this class, so it is essential that students attend all classes (unless they are ill) and keep up with the reading as listed in this syllabus. There are no "make up quizzes," but students will be allowed to drop their two lowest quiz grades of the semester. Quizzes will be factored into the participation grade, but active and engaged classroom participation in the form of brilliant questions or insightful responses is also part of that grade.

**Important General Notices**

Please note that the in-class final exam takes place on the **Thursday of finals week**. Please do not ask to be given an early exam. The only exceptions

to taking the exam at the assigned time are listed in official university policy governing exams. If you qualify for such an exception, you must notify your professors by the deadline listed in the policy.

The **last day to withdraw** from a course this semester is November 16. Such action would require the signature of your instructor. Do not wait until the last day to do this because your instructor may not be available that day.

Students will submit each of the two essays electronically through Blackboard/SafeAssign and also in hard copy directly to the teaching assistant at the class session in which they are due. This will aid in making sure that plagiarism will not be rewarded. Note that it is the student's responsibility to deliver files that are in good shape and can be easily read. Submission of "corrupted" or unreadable files will lead to late penalties. Do not submit any late papers to the department office—they really do not want them.

### **Academic Misconduct**

In my experience, students who choose to plagiarize often cite stress, late attention to projects, illness and being jammed up with multiple assignments due in the same week, as factors in their decision to take short cuts and submit work that is not their own. None of these will excuse plagiarized work. You are advised to plan your semester carefully from the beginning and arrange your schedule of work so you can avoid putting yourself in such situations. The Office of Student Success offers free workshops on how to manage time and the KU Writing Center site offers suggested ways to avoid plagiarism.

<http://www.writing.ku.edu/students/guides.shtml#2>

Incidents of plagiarism are subject to severe sanctions and you should therefore avoid jeopardizing your future. Submit only original work and make sure that you give credit in proper citations to those whose work you are borrowing or drawing ideas from. In the event that you conclude that you cannot submit original work on time, it is your responsibility to notify the graduate teaching assistant so that we can discuss appropriate strategies.

Academic misconduct is not limited to plagiarism. It also includes forgery, cheating and disruptive or disrespectful behavior. Some recent cases have also involved "unauthorized collaboration" which includes the sharing of papers between students. While it may be useful to discuss ideas with other students, furnishing them with work that they might copy from or submit themselves for a grade is not acceptable behavior. The History Department's policy, procedures and definitions regarding academic misconduct are available on its Undergraduate webpage at: <http://www.history.ku.edu/under/> and definitions of inappropriate classroom behavior are defined in the Code of Student Rights and Responsibilities (CSRR), Article 22, Section C, and the University Senate Rules and Regulations, Section 2.4.6. Article 22 of CSRR also defines potential sanctions for these types of infractions.

### **Assignments**

General Instructions for All Essays: Both of these essays should be typewritten, double-spaced, using a 12-point font and one-inch borders. Please proofread the papers carefully before submission to avoid errors and to receive maximum points, since overall presentation is one of the elements in the grade. The essays should draw on course readings, lectures, and films for material to substantiate their claims and support their arguments. Be sure to fully cite all

sources (**and provide relevant page numbers**) that you draw data or ideas from, even if you are not using a direct quotation. **All papers are due by the beginning of the class** and late papers will be subject to grading penalties. All essays must be submitted electronically through Safe Assign and in hard copy, handed to the teaching assistant. Please observe the page length parameters since effective editing is part of the skill of good writing. Read the instructions carefully—failure to follow them may result in the return of the essay for a rewrite with a consequent grade reduction.

**Citations** for both assignments should follow these styles and should include **all** of these elements. When using footnotes, please drop them to the bottom of the page rather than the end of the paper and avoid parenthetical citations in the text itself. Make sure that the bibliography is alphabetized by author's last name.

Citation for a book:

Stella Dong, **Shanghai 1842-1949: The Rise and Fall of a Decadent City**  
(New York: William Morrow, 2000)

Citation for an article:

Anton Rosenthal, "Spectacle, Fear and Protest: A Guide to the History of Urban Public Space in Latin America," **Social Science History**, 24:1, Spring 2000, 33-73.

(Do not forget to include the complete page numbers for articles in the bibliography and specific page references in individual footnotes.)

For newspapers, please include the title of the article, date, title of the newspaper and page number.

You may wish to consult a writing manual or style manual to aid in the presentation of your essay. These are widely available and are a good investment. They are particularly useful in clarifying how and when to cite sources, and how to write topic sentences and introductory paragraphs which will make your arguments more compelling. All citations must include the relevant page numbers from the original source.

Instructions for Individual Assignments:

1) Cityscape Essay: **Due in class September 22**. Discussing the novels of the author Raymond Chandler, Liahna Babener writes, "Chandler's Los Angeles is a metropolis of lies. Artifice is everywhere, a theme suggested by an insistent pattern of analogies to moviemaking and show business that informs virtually every novel...The architecture of Los Angeles—often derivative, insubstantial, and tasteless—attests to the city's preoccupation with façade. Its buildings, roadways, and grid patterns have been perversely grafted onto an unreceptive landscape...Rampant fakery governs human experience as well. Throughout the novels, the documents of daily life are seen to be false constructs; the business world is beset with quackery and double-dealing. Most important, personal identity is portrayed as unstable and uncertain. In a society of second chances and new beginnings, people are not what they seem or who they used to be." (David Fine, **Los Angeles in Fiction**, p. 128)

Select a novel from the list below and read it (note: not all of these titles are available in Watson Library so you may wish to use a public library, the Inter-Library Loan Service or Raven Books on 7<sup>th</sup> Street to acquire one of the books). You may need to read sections of several novels until you find one that interests you and that you would enjoy writing about. Then write an essay of 6 to 7 pages that compares the novel to Mayra Montero's **Dancing to Almendra** on this notion of the "city of lies." Your essay should offer an answer to **each** of the following questions:

- **How are the representations of the social landscape of the sin city similar and different in the two novels?**
- **What aspects of the city does each author describe in detail and what do these descriptions reveal about the nature of the city?**
- **Does either of the two cities appear to be a physical or moral labyrinth that its characters have to navigate and if so, describe it?**
- **What opportunities do the cities appear to offer their residents and what limitations do they place on their behavior?**
- **Would you want to live in either of these places during the periods in which the novels are set? Why or why not?**

Kobo Abe, **The Ruined Map** (Tokyo)

Antonio Lobo Antunes, **Fado Alexandrino** (Lisbon)

Lisa Appignanesi, **Paris Requiem**

Louis Aragon, **Paris Peasant**

Roberto Arlt, **The Seven Madmen** (Buenos Aires)

Roberto Arlt, **Mad Toy** (Buenos Aires)

Cara Black, **Murder in the Marais** (Paris)

Cara Black, **Murder in Belleville** (Paris)

André Breton, **Nadja** (Paris)

Bo Caldwell, **The Distant Land of My Father** (Shanghai)

Adolfo Bioy Casares, **The Dream of Heroes** (Buenos Aires)

Kate Braverman, **Palm Lattitudes** (Los Angeles)

Raymond Chandler, **The High Window**

Daniel Chavarría, **Adios Muchachos** (Havana)

Daniel Chavarría, **Tango for a Torturer** (Havana)

Aziz Chouaki, **The Star of Algiers**

Arnaldo Correa, **Cold Havana Ground**

James Dalessandro, **1906** (San Francisco)

Joan Didion, **Play It As It Lays** (Los Angeles and Las Vegas)

Alfred Döblin, **Berlin Alexanderplatz**

Geoff Dyer, **Paris Trance**

Howard Engel, **Murder in Montparnasse: A Mystery of Literary Paris**

John Fante, **Dreams from Bunker Hill** (Los Angeles)

J.G. Farrell, **The Singapore Grip**

Charles Fleming, **After Havana**

Luiz Alfredo Garcia-Roza, **December Heat** (Rio de Janeiro)

Luiz Alfredo Garcia-Roza, **A Window in Copacabana** (Rio de Janeiro)

Luiz Alfredo Garcia-Roza, **Southwesterly Wind** (Rio)

Luiz Alfredo Garcia-Roza, **Silence of the Rain** (Rio)

Alicia Giménez-Bartlett, **Dog Day** (Barcelona)  
 Denise Hamilton, **The Last Embrace** (Los Angeles)  
 Dashiell Hammett, **The Dain Curse** (San Francisco)  
 Timothy Hallinan, **A Nail Through the Heart** (Bangkok)  
 Christopher Isherwood, **Berlin Stories**  
 Kazuo Ishiguro, **When We Were Orphans** (Shanghai)  
 Jean-Claude Izzo, **Total Chaos** (Marseilles)  
 Jean-Claude Izzo, **Chourmo** (Marseilles)  
 Cynthia Kadohata, **In the Heart of the Valley of Love** (Los Angeles)  
 Yasunari Kawabata, **The Scarlet Gang of Asakusa** (Tokyo)  
 Philip Kerr, **March Violets** (Berlin)  
 Yasmina Khadra, **Morituri** (Algiers)  
 Gavin Kramer, **Shopping** (Tokyo)  
 José Latour, **Havana World Series**  
 Tomas Eloy Martinez, **The Tango Singer** (Buenos Aires)  
 Seicho Matsumoto, **Inspector Imanishi Investigates** (Tokyo)  
 Manuel Vazquez Montalbán, **The Buenos Aires Quintet**  
 Manuel Vazquez Montalbán, **An Olympic Death** (Barcelona)  
 Walter Mosley, **Little Scarlet** (Los Angeles)  
 David Mitchell, **Number9Dream** (Tokyo)  
 Harold Nebenzal, **Café Berlin**  
 Achy Obejas, **Ruins** (Havana)  
 Orhan Pamuk, **The Black Book** (Istanbul)  
 Orhan Pamuk, **The New Life** (Istanbul)  
 Leonardo Padura Fuentes, **Adios Hemingway** (Havana)  
 Leonardo Padura Fuentes, **Havana Red**  
 Leonardo Padura Fuentes, **Havana Gold**  
 Peter Plate, **Angels of Catastrophe** (San Francisco)  
 Peter Plate, **Fogtown** (San Francisco)  
 Qui Xiaolong, **A Loyal Character Dancer** (Shanghai)  
 Jonathan Rabb, **Shadow and Light** (Berlin)  
 Luis J. Rodriguez, **Music of the Mill** (Los Angeles)  
 James Sallis, **Ghost of a Flea** (New Orleans)  
 Lisa See, **Shanghai Girls** (Los Angeles)  
 Shih Shu-Ching, **City of the Queen: A Novel of Colonial Hong Kong**  
 Georges Simenon, **Maigret Loses His Temper** (Paris)  
 Georges Simenon, **The Engagement** (Paris)  
 Georges Simenon, **The Man Who Watched Trains Go By** (Amsterdam)  
 Martin Cruz Smith, **Havana Bay**  
 Paco Ignacio Taibo II, **The Shadow of the Shadow** (Mexico City)  
 Paco Ignacio Taibo II, **An Easy Thing** (Mexico City)  
 Junichiro Tanizaki, **Naomi** (Tokyo)  
 Zoé Valdés, **Yocandra in the Paradise of Nada** (Havana)  
 Michael Ventura, **The Death of Frank Sinatra** (Las Vegas)  
 Angel Wagenstein, **Farewell, Shanghai**  
 Janwillem van de Wetering, **Death of a Hawker** (Amsterdam)  
 Janwillem van de Wetering, **Outsider in Amsterdam**  
 Wei Hui, **Shanghai Baby**  
 Andrew Winston, **Looped** (Chicago)  
 Cornell Woolrich, **The Black Path of Fear** (Havana)

Karen Tei Yamashita, **Tropic of Orange** (Los Angeles)  
Yokomitsu Riichi, **Shanghai**

2) Comparative research project. **Due in class November 19.** Students will choose one pair of cities from the list below.

Barcelona and Rio de Janeiro  
Chicago and Berlin  
Paris and Tokyo  
Shanghai and San Francisco  
Amsterdam and Los Angeles  
St. Petersburg and Bucharest  
Miami and Havana  
London and Johannesburg  
Beirut and Cairo  
New Orleans and Algiers  
New York and Mexico City  
Bangkok and Buenos Aires  
Macao and Rome  
Istanbul and Mumbai (Bombay)

They will then find and read **at least 9** sources including articles in **scholarly journals** (some examples of these are **The Journal of Urban History**, **Comparative Studies in Society and History** and **The Journal of Historical Sociology**, but there are many more that would be suitable and they can be located through databases such as Article First). Other useful sources might be travel accounts from the period under study, memoirs of key participants in the city's life, secondary historical works that analyze urban processes, newspapers that provide contemporary descriptions, and government reports on crime or the entertainment industry, etc. Course texts may be used but they will not count toward the minimum number of sources. At least **three** of the sources must be journal articles (and not book reviews). Journal articles are usually 15-30 pages long and are richly documented. They should not be confused with short book reviews which often also appear in scholarly journals. At least **two of the sources must be a primary historical documents**, one for each city. Primary documents are normally created at the time of the events or processes under consideration and may include government reports issued by ministries, and newspaper articles or travel accounts published during the era being researched. They might also include memoirs and oral histories published many years later but involving participants and witnesses to the original events. Each primary source should be described in the bibliography so that it is clear how it functions as a primary source. No more than one citation may be a webpage or other internet source (please be cognizant of the quality of any site used) and **no encyclopedias** of any kind may be used. A one-page double-spaced proposal and a one-page bibliography that postulates one central argument, describes what the paper will investigate and what it hopes to discover is due on **October 6** (primary sources should be marked with an asterisk). After collecting and reading these sources, the student will write an essay of 8 to 9 pages that compares the key elements of the two cities at any point between 1870 and 1980 (a reasonable era to investigate would be a

decade in each city's history, though the cities do not have to be analyzed for the same decade—the Wasserstrom article is useful on this point). The analysis should be limited to 20-year periods. Please remember that well developed comparisons discuss both similarities and differences in their cases. This historical comparison must go beyond merely a parallel description to evaluate the two cases and fully answer the following questions:

- **In what ways can these be considered “spectacle cities”?**
- **To what degree did they tolerate what might have been considered taboo behavior in other locales?**
- **Was there an attempt to construct a cosmopolitan culture in either city and what type of opposition did it meet?**
- **What were the risks and pleasures associated with living in these cities?**
- **Which of the two cities was the most “decadent” in terms of its culture? Why?**

**Please note:** All essays should contain a one-page bibliography. Each primary source should be **marked with an asterisk** to identify it and each journal article should be marked by two asterisks.

### **Weekly Schedule**

(The schedule is subject to change and students are responsible for all changes announced in class. Readings are to be completed by the beginning of the week in which they are assigned.)

August 20: Introduction

August 25: Key Concepts: An Overview of Theory and Methods

Video: “Subway Stories”

Reading: Handouts: Wasserstrom article; Review of Ekrich in **The Nation**

August 27: The Landscape of the Spectacle City: Paris Morgue, Times Square, Pyramids; The City at Night

Video: “Moulin Rouge”

September 1: Spectacle in the Industrial City: 1893 World’s Fair and the White City in Chicago

Reading: Begin reading **Dancing to “Almendra”**

Videos: “Chicago, City of the Century” “World’s Expo”

September 3 and 8: The City as Labyrinth: The Casbah and Colonialism in Algiers; The Detective as Guide

Reading: Finish reading **Dancing to “Almendra”**

Videos: “Pepe le Moko” and “The Battle of Algiers”

September 10: Los Angeles as the City of Lies: Film Noir and Hollywood;

Reading: Second novel for essay on the cityscape

Videos: classic film noir clips

September 15: Havana: From Colonial Capital to Modern City; Nostalgia  
Video: "Havana"

September 17: Corruption and Tourism in Havana's "Golden Era"; Tropicana  
Videos: Meyer Lansky biography; "Paradise Under the Stars"

September 22: Havana: The Revolutionary Era  
**First essay due September 22**

September 24: Jazz Cities and Districts of Sin: Kansas City and New Orleans  
Reading: Begin reading for research project  
Videos: "The Devil's Music;" "Ken Burns' Jazz," "Jazz '34"

September 29: Los Angeles: The Culture of Central Avenue  
Video: "Devil in a Blue Dress"

October 1: The Zoot Suit Riots and the history of the LAPD  
Reading: continue reading for research project  
Videos: "Zoot Suit Riots", "Dragnet," "Mulholland Falls"

October 6-8: Berlin: The Word City and the Visual City; Modern Woman  
Reading: Large, 47-155  
Videos: "Legendary Sin Cities" "Berlin, Symphony of a City,"  
**Research Project Proposal due October 6**

October 13: Weimar Berlin and Cabaret Culture  
Reading: Large, 157-317  
Videos: "The Blue Angel," "Cabaret"

October 15: Fall Break

October 20: Berlin: Politics of the Street and the Cinema  
Video: "M"

October 22: **Midterm Exam** (bring a bluebook)

October 27: Anti-Urbanism, War and the Destruction of City Cultures

October 29: Paris--The Revolutionary City: Communards and Anarchists

November 3: Paris: The Surrealists and Montparnasse  
Reading: Dong, 1-153  
Video: "Legendary Sin Cities"

November 5: Paris Streets: The Jazz City; The Situationists

November 10: Shanghai as a Western Enclave  
Reading: Dong, 154-294  
Video: "Shanghai Gesture"

November 12: Shanghai: Prostitutes, Modern Women, Opium and the Police  
Videos: “Legendary Sin Cities,” “Shanghai Triad”

November 17: Shanghai: Safe Harbor  
Videos: “Port of Last Resort”

November 19: TBA

**Second Paper due on November 19**

November 24: Las Vegas as a Frontier Town  
Reading: Cooper, 1-103

November 26: **Thanksgiving**

December 1: Myth of Benny Siegel and the Founding of the Strip  
Reading: Cooper, 103-248  
Videos: “Las Vegas Unconventional” and “Bugsy”

December 3 and 8: Las Vegas: The Ratpack, Theming and the Corporate Era,  
Course Evaluations  
Videos: “Oceans 11,” “The Cooler” and “Dreamland”

December 10: The Future of the City

**Course Expectations**

- Attendance at all class sessions is required. This is especially important since many videos and multi-media products will be shown and discussed in class and will not be available for viewing at other times. Also, classroom discussion is an integral part of the learning process and requires engaged preparation by completing all reading by the session for which it is assigned.
- Incomplete grades will be issued only in emergencies. No late essays will be accepted after the last day of class. No makeup exams will be given, except for incapacitating illness or an emergency. It is the student’s responsibility to communicate any problems in completing the work directly to the professor in a timely manner, preferably during office hours. **No early final exams will be given** so please note the date and time of the final listed above.
- Please make every effort to arrive on time to each class as late entrances will be disruptive and they show a lack of respect for the learning process. If you have a reason why you cannot comply with this request, please talk to me.
- Students should commit an **average of at least six hours** per week outside of class to studying for this course. This expectation follows the Faculty Senate Rules and Regulations, Article 5, Section 1.1 which states that “One semester hour means course work normally represented by an hour of class instruction and two hours of study a week for one

semester, or an equivalent amount of work. The concept may vary according to the level at which instruction is offered.” Depending on their abilities, some students may need to put in more time to complete the assigned work.

- All work is to be handed in during class meetings in paper copy and uploaded electronically to Blackboard. Late work should be handed directly to Professor Rosenthal or the teaching assistant at the next class session and will likely incur penalties. Do not submit any late work to the department office.
- While discussion is encouraged and students should feel free to express their own ideas, opinions should be voiced in a civil manner.
- Students must avoid plagiarism and submit only original work. If you are unsure of the definition and possible penalties regarding plagiarized work, please read the relevant sections of the KU Student Handbook or consult with me before turning in an assignment. A digital plagiarism detection program may be used to check your work.
- I expect that students will pay attention during the lectures and discussions. This means that they will use computers in class only for the purpose of taking notes, and that all they will not use other electronic devices, read newspapers, study for other classes, sleep, eat or conduct conversations with their neighbors.
- Students are responsible for all changes made to the syllabus that are announced in class or posted on Blackboard.

### **Special Notice on Intellectual Property and Note-taking**

Course materials prepared by the instructor, together with the content of all lectures and review sessions presented by the instructor are the property of the instructor. Video and audio recording of lectures and review sessions without the consent of the instructor is **prohibited**. In the rare event that consent is given to record a lecture, such recordings may not be modified and must not be transferred or transmitted to any other person, whether or not that individual is enrolled in the course.

### **Writing Assistance:**

If you would like help in preparing your written assignments, you may visit the KU Writing Center located in 4017 Wescoe. It is a free, university-wide service for all students. Trained writing consultants, undergraduate and graduate students from a variety of disciplines, are available to work with writers on their writing projects. When you visit, bring your work in progress and an idea of what you would like to work on--organization, support, documentation, editing, etc. Please check the website at <http://www.writing.ku.edu> for available hours. While consultants will not proofread and edit papers, they will provide feedback on drafts in progress and share strategies for proofreading and editing. For more information, please call 864-2399 or send an e-mail to [writing@ku.edu](mailto:writing@ku.edu) .

**Disabilities:**

The Office of Disability Resources (SSD), 22 Strong, 785-864-2620 (v/tty), coordinates accommodations and services for KU courses. If you have a disability for which you may request accommodation in KU classes and have not contacted them, please do so as soon as possible. Please also see me privately early in the semester.

**Office Hours:**

Anton Rosenthal  
Thursdays, 9:30 am-12:30 pm and by appointment  
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## Teaching Assistant:

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