KEY TERMS IN THE CHINESE WORLDVIEW
Ài
Loving Chinese Style
Romantic love historically rare in China:

• The society is historically based on hierarchical relationships
• The family stands at the core with individuality suppressed
• Arranged marriages were the norm

Confucius saw five major human relationships that should be governed by li, or propriety. Those relationships are:

1. Ruler and subject
2. Father and son
3. Husband and wife
4. Oldest son and younger brothers
5. Elders and juniors (friends)
Historically, from a young age, boys and girls were more or less raised separately.

- No dating, feelings of love suppressed
- Personal feelings sublimated to the interests of the family, clan and community
- Romantic love seen as unpredictable, uncertain
Love channelled into other projects and/or pursuits

• Love seen by Chinese sages or philosophers as a spiritual manifestation binding humans to one another and the cosmos
• Love as good behaviour, grace; an expression of personal character.
Romantic love has emerged in the last 25-30 years as an aspect of the Chinese experience, particularly in youth culture.

- Liberalization of the social environment under Mao Zedong and globalization have had their impact.
我爱你
An 安: PEACE
In their folk religion, the Chinese built into it what many scientists put forth about the cosmos/universe at present: that there is indeed order in the seemingly unending cycle of destruction and creation.

This chaos saw the Chinese give primacy to the masculine sex in the cosmos (order of things). Men, therefore, were the keepers of heaven and everything flowed from this basic concept.
This is in keeping with the yin/yang perception of the dynamic of opposites. Men were seen as fulfilling a positive forceful role in the universe on high and women the negative, receptive matter below.

Thus, the only way that heaven on earth or tranquility could be assured was to have women be subordinated to men.
Ān, which connotes tranquility through male dominance over females, is thus constructed into several Chinese words and their characters: safety, anxiety, and peace of mind.

It is important to keep in mind that contemporary China is built on the notion of equality of the sexes, and is actually quite visible in daily life. Nevertheless this aspect of Chinese folk religion still retains some authority—women are only slowly filling the ranks of the highest levels of power.
报答
bào dá: Bartering Social Credits
1. Westerners are conditioned to base personal and business relationships on impersonal rules that apply to all—friends, acquaintances, and strangers as well.

- Based on historical notions of fairness, frankness and a sense of equality -- an outgrowth of Enlightenment principles.
2. Chinese are enculturated to base relationships on social debts built up over time with family members, relatives, teachers, friends, business associates, and employers.

- In accepting help or favours Chinese folk build up a reservoir of social debt, but they also build up debts owed to them by others in turn.

- Paying and collecting these debts serves as the base for much of the social interaction in China (bao) social reciprocity.
3. Fulfilling the obligations of *bao* is the way a person nurtures *face*, *miànzi*

• Face is a "bankable" notion in Chinese culture. Having face in front of one's business colleagues or within a community is literally a statement of that person's value. People with good face are generally dependable, reliable, and safe to interact and do business with.

• Failure to pay social debts that are owed is seen as highly dishonorable—it is uncivilized and leads to a loss of face.

• The idea of face in China has far more profound meaning and consequences than its equivalent in the west—pride.
The Chinese Life-Line: 关系 / guānxi

1. The structure of imperial China left the population at the will and whims of absolute rulers. The population was no more than a servant to the state or the emperor himself.

• The historical experience of Chinese folk saw them burdened with tasks and responsibilities as determined by the state or government; status was fixed by birth; there was no mobility—travel could only take place with official permission.

• Confucian familial hierarchy and ritual also contributed to obligations and social chores.
2. As a result of the network of obligations, the population came to rely upon developing and maintaining cooperative relationships called guanxi (connections). Using guanxi one could call on someone for help in obtaining something.

• Individuals, even at present, must deal regularly with numerous public agencies, officials, associations, and business persons. Without guanxi completing or fulfilling a task, chore or goal becomes that much more difficult
• People spend enormous amounts of time and effort cultivating guanxi or connections. *Guanxi* is the logical outcome of *bao*.

• A complicating factor in *guanxi* is that all interactions must be paid attention to no matter how small since they are all treated as matters of consequence.

• There is a compulsion to stay even, in western terms, with those who give gifts, buy meals and drinks and do a variety of favors. People may become better known for their *guanxi* than for personal qualities—this is the power of *guanxi*. 
bù fāng biàn: Inconvenient
(or How to Say No in Chinese)

1. Confucian ritual practice is geared to sustaining social harmony—to not make waves and *bufandbiande* contributes to this by encouraging formal politeness.

• Chinese tend to avoid any response or comment that may be upsetting in terms of another person's feelings. If something cannot be done or a person simply cannot complete a task that has been requested or he/she does not want to do it, the response could very well be *bufangbiande*—inconvenient.
• The answer for Chinese folk is seen as sufficient and there is no need to pursue the issue any more. Asking for an explanation as westerners often do based on their enculturation is seen as a breach of etiquette.

• For the Chinese, coming from a high context culture where what is not said is more significant than what is said very often, there is no need for an explanation.
1. The Chinese concept of self – how they distinguish themselves from others – is quite different from the western notion of self.

• Gerenzhuyi literally means one person doctrine and is most often used as a reference to selfish and immoral behaviour.
• In the west the sanctity of the individual and the cultivation of individualism has been historically constructed into a western worldview. The historical Chinese experience has seen the cultivating of a collectivist manner of being in the world—group consciousness has long been emphasized (though this is indeed changing).

• Overt displays of individualism tend to be frowned upon and are seen as disruptive and unprincipled.
忠诚
zhōng chéng: Personal loyalty first
Historically, public institutions in China are viewed with a measure of suspicion at best. Once again, the structure of imperial China left the population at the will and whims of absolute rulers.

The population was no more than a servant to the state or the emperor himself. To effectively get needs met outside of the protection of the immediate family, the building of personal bonds and relationships is key.
Cheng, or personal bonds, requires time, care and an investment. Westerners are conditioned to base personal and business relationships on impersonal rules that apply to all—friends, acquaintances, and strangers as well. This is based on historical notions of fairness, frankness and a sense of equality — an outgrowth of Enlightenment principles.
Building personal bonds includes sharing meals, and recreational activities—relationships that are kept warm with frequent meetings. Of course distance may determine frequency, but in the end it is important to remember the expression *the tea gets cold.*