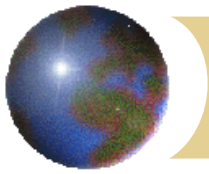


Everyday China

John Hooker
Carnegie Mellon University

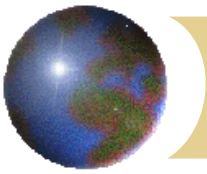
CMU Osher Course
September 2023



Outline

- ❖ Family & marriage
- ❖ Interpersonal relationships
- ❖ Humor
- ❖ Meals
- ❖ Superstition
- ❖ Health & science

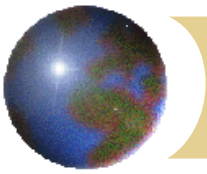




Family

- ❖ Life is all about **family, family, family.**
 - ❖ Children come first.
 - ❖ Parents, grandparents and ancestors next.
 - ❖ Self comes last.
- ❖ One's basic source of **security.**



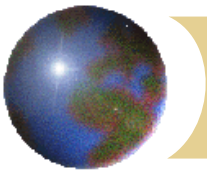


Family

✦ Family discipline

- ✦ Everyone **adores** on small children.
- ✦ Older children are more strictly **disciplined**.
- ✦ Kids **obey** their parents, or else...



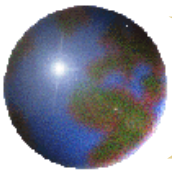


Family

✦ High expectations

- ❑ Much talk of spoiled “little emperors” in single-child families.
- ❑ True? Maybe, but they are under pressure to **succeed**.
 - **High grades** in school, admission to a **top university**, and a **prestigious job**.
 - These bring **honor** to the family, and provide financial **support** as parents and grandparents age.





Family

Family hierarchy

Grandfathers

- Paternal 爺爺 (*yé yé*), maternal 老爺 (*lǎo yé*) or *wàifù*.

Grandmothers

- Paternal 奶奶 (*nài nài*), maternal 姥姥 (*lǎo lǎo*) or *wàipó*

Parents

- Father 爸爸 (*bà bà*)
- Mother 媽媽 (*mā mā*)

Older sibling

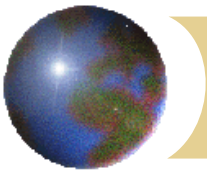
- Brother 哥哥 (*gē gē*)
- Sister 姐姐 (*jǐe jǐe*)

Younger sibling

- Brother 弟弟 (*dì dì*)
- Sister 妹妹 (*mèi mèi*)

$dì\ dì \neq dī\ dī =$ "beep beep"
(Chinese version of Uber)

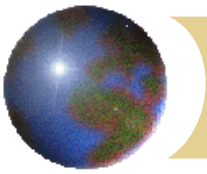




Marriage

- ❖ A union between two families
 - ❖ But not nearly to the same extent as in, say, India.
 - ❖ Arranged marriages have been illegal since 1950.
 - ❖ But parents play an important role in choice of spouse.
 - Parents **encourage** marriage, partly for future security ... & grandchildren.



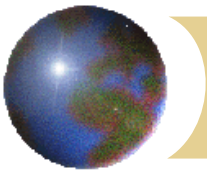


Marriage

✦ Less interest in marriage?

- ✦ Legal marriage age is 22 for men, 20 for women.
- ✦ Declining marriage rate, but partly due to fewer young people.
 - The media report falling interest in marriage among millennials. True? Maybe.
- ✦ Average age of marriage has increased to late 20s.



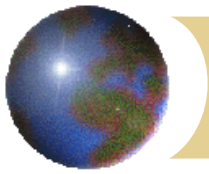


Marriage

✦ Encouraging marriage

- ✦ Young people sometimes **rent** boyfriends or girlfriends to reassure parents of interest in marriage.



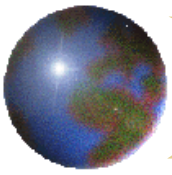


Marriage

✦ Encouraging marriage

- ✦ Young people sometimes **rent** boyfriends or girlfriends to reassure parents of interest in marriage.
- ✦ Or rent “shopping boyfriends” in malls.





Marriage

☀ Weddings

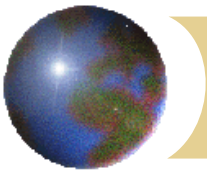
- ❑ Western-style weddings are popular.
- ❑ But traditional weddings (more fun?) also practiced.



Part of tea ceremony



Double happiness

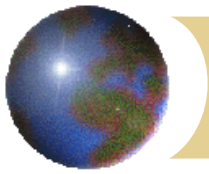


Family

- ✦ Honoring ancestors
 - ❏ Burn incense and/or leave fruit or other offering at graves
 - ❏ During Spring Festival or *Qīngmíng* Festival



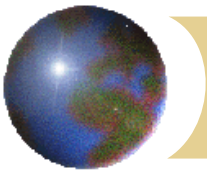
- **Spring festival** 2024 (Year of the Dragon): 10 Feb, public holiday 9-15 Feb.
- ***Qīngmíng* Festival** 2024 (similar to Memorial Day): 4 April.



Family

- ✦ Honoring ancestors
 - ❑ Some families burn fake money, mobile phones, etc.

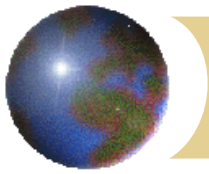




Family

- ❖ Other Spring Festival activities
 - ❖ **Family reunions** – creating the Spring Festival Travel Rush
 - ❖ Fairs, performances, fireworks, parades, banquets, etc.



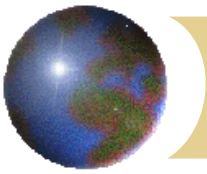


Interpersonal relationships

✿ Among associates

- ✦ Show courtesy, humility. Take care to **save face**.
- ✦ Before speaking or acting, always consider the effect on **face**.



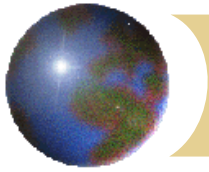


Interpersonal relationships

✿ Among associates

- ❑ Show courtesy, humility. Take care to **save face**.
- ❑ Before speaking or acting, always consider the effect on **face**.
 - The **boss** must not lose face, because this could lead to a **loss of authority** in a high power distance culture.
 - A **good boss** must not unnecessarily cause **subordinates** to lose face, for the same reason.

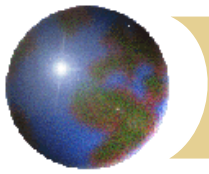




Interpersonal relationships

✿ Among associates

- ❏ More important to be **nice** than **right**.
- ❏ Why?
- ❏ Rule-based Westerners can speak frankly because they believe in universal principles of reason and fairness.
 - So, differences can be resolved by appeal to **facts and logic**.
- ❏ Chinese make no such assumption.
 - **Life is based on real personal relationships**, not a postulated system of universal rationality.
- ❏ So, **one must not give offense in the first place**.

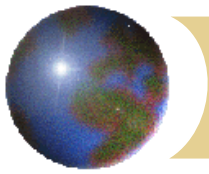


Interpersonal relationships

✦ Among associates

- ✦ When differences of opinion must eventually be resolved...
- ✦ ...**defer** to older relatives, boss, government official.



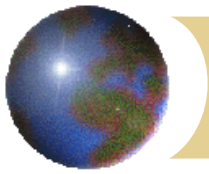


Interpersonal relationships

✿ Among associates

- ❑ When there is no relevant common authority...
- ❑ ...behavior is regulated by ***guānxi***, which is cultivated by exchange of favors over years.
- ❑ ***Guānxi*** is a relationship of **mutual trust**.
- ❑ It remains **absolutely essential to business and diplomacy**.
 - Diplomats: take note!





Interpersonal relationships

✚ Among strangers

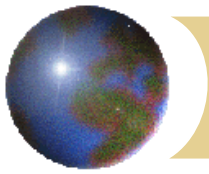
- ✚ No need to preserve relationships.

- ✚ **Rudeness**, shoving and shouting may occur in public.

- Frequent complaints that Chinese tourists are rude.

- ✚ Yet crime rate is low. Why? Family.



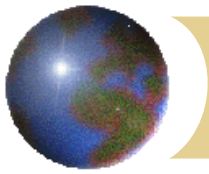


Interpersonal relationships

✦ Introductions

- ✦ Accomplished by exchange of **business cards**.
- ✦ ...rather than mentioning one's name verbally.
 - Receive card with both hands and treat it with respect.
- ✦ Best to avoid direct eye contact, particularly with someone of higher rank.



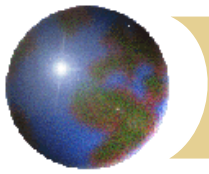


Interpersonal relationships

✦ Introductions

- ✦ Accept offer of (green) tea.





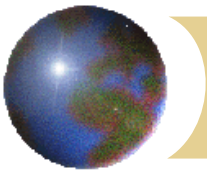
Interpersonal relationships

☉ Forms of address

- ☒ Surname first: **Wang Lin** is Mr. Wang (*Wáng xiānsheng*).
- ☒ May use **Lin Wang** in English-speaking context.
 - Mrs. Wang (*Wáng nǚshì*), Miss Wang (*Wáng xiǎojiē*) uncommon.

☉ Titles preferred

- | | |
|------------------------|----------------|
| ☒ <i>Lǎo Wáng</i> | Old Wang |
| ☒ <i>Xiǎo Wáng</i> | Young Wang |
| ☒ <i>Wáng jīnglǐ</i> | Manager Wang |
| ☒ <i>Wáng jiàoshòu</i> | Professor Wang |
| ☒ <i>Wáng lǎoshī</i> | Teacher Wang |



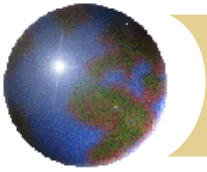
Interpersonal relationships

✿ A largely no-touch culture

- ✿ Although handshakes are becoming more common, especially with Westerners.
- ✿ Let them initiate.
- ✿ Don't try to bow (mainly a Japanese thing), although a slight nod is OK.

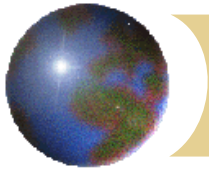


Not a good idea



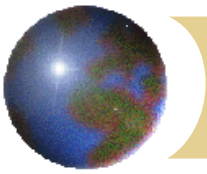
Interpersonal relationships

- ✚ Different sense of privacy
 - ❏ People may ask about your **age** (no need to answer) ...
 - ❏ ... or your **salary** (perhaps to give you a chance to show off).
 - ❏ Emphasis on **family** privacy, rather than informational privacy as in the West.



Interpersonal relationships

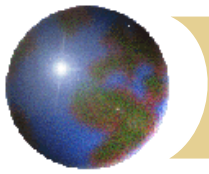
- ❖ Different sense of privacy
 - ❖ People may ask about your **age** (no need to answer) ...
 - ❖ ... or your **salary** (perhaps to give you a chance to show off).
 - ❖ Emphasis on **family** privacy, rather than informational privacy as in the West.
 - ❖ Aside from family matters, no problem with government surveillance.
 - There is an Internet privacy law (PIPL) similar to Europe's GDPR, but it protects information "that is likely to result in damage to **personal dignity**..."
 - ... and does **not** apply to **government**.



Humor

- ✦ Based on amusement, not jokes.
 - ❏ Delight with something **different** or **surprising**.
 - ❏ Variety is the spice of life.
 - ❏ People will laugh at jokes, but before the punch line.
 - ❏ May giggle (or stare) at foreigners. Don't take offense.
 - ❏ People may ask to take a photo.



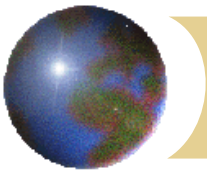


Meals

✿ Main object: **have fun.**

- ❏ Host will seat you.
- ❏ If you're clumsy with chopsticks, no problem.
- ❏ People may giggle (all in good fun).
- ❏ Don't fill your own teacup.
- ❏ Don't take a drink until others do – there may be a toast.



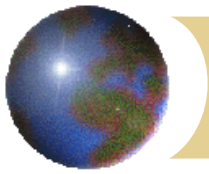


Meals

✦ Just so you know...

- ❏ Host may use his/her chopsticks to put food on your plate.
- ❏ Sometimes it's best not to know what you're eating.
- ❏ Remember – variety is the spice of life (and food)
- ❏ Beware – Spicy side of Sichuan hot pot is **hot**.



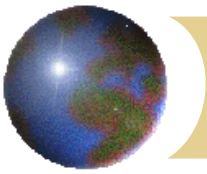


Meals

✦ Etiquette

- ❖ It's OK to slurp your noodles.
- ❖ You may be expected to ask for rice.
- ❖ Save room – there may be a dozen courses.
- ❖ Soup generally comes near the end of the meal.
- ❖ Don't blow your nose at the table.
- ❖ OK to use a toothpick, but cover your mouth.





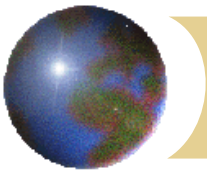
Superstition

✦ (Un)lucky numbers

- ❏ 8 = wealth
- ❏ 9 = longevity
- ❏ 4 = death
- ❏ Good sequences: 168, 289, 518

Very
expensive
Hong Kong
license
plates





Superstition

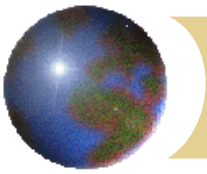
☉ (Un)lucky numbers

- ❏ 8 = wealth
- ❏ 9 = longevity
- ❏ 4 = death
- ❏ Good sequences:
168, 289, 518



Elevator panel

Bāguà (8 sections) mirror frightens evil spirits



Superstition

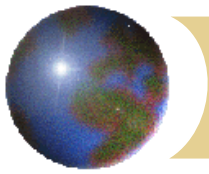
✿ Auspicious dates

❏ Can be found in lunar calendar or by consulting an astrologer.

- Good dates to **travel**, start a **business**, get **married**, renovate a **house**, purchase a **car**



Mass wedding on Feb 22, 2022



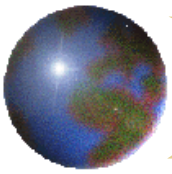
Superstition

☉ *Fēng shuǐ*

- ☒ Set of design principles
 - Literally, “**wind & water,**” which is a desirable location for a tomb.
- ☒ Went out of style after 1990s?



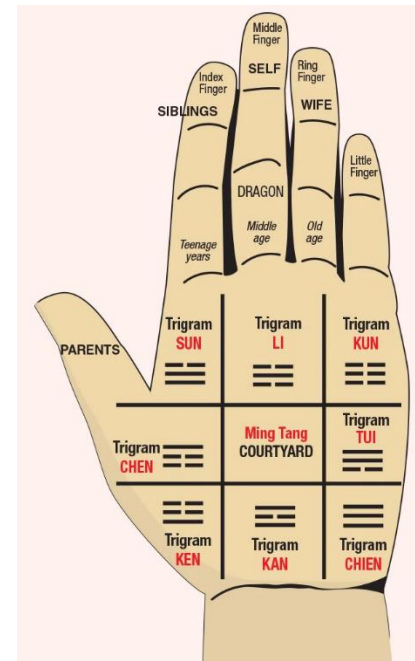
Hong Kong University of Science and Technology
Design follows *fēng shuǐ* principles

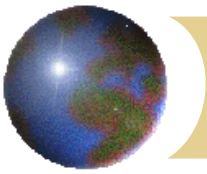


Superstition

☉ Foretelling the future

- ☒ Palm reading
- ☒ Incense coils
- ☒ Fortune sticks



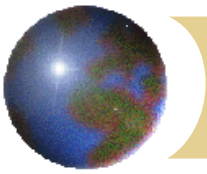


Superstition

- ✦ Is superstition banned?
 - ❑ Discouraged by Chinese government.
 - Banned for Party members.
 - ❑ Still practiced to some extent.
 - Very popular in **Hong Kong**.
 - **Folk religion** lives on in **Taiwan**.



Shrine to Wong Tai Sin (healer)
in Hong Kong shop



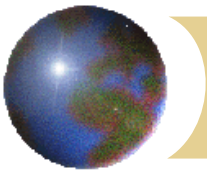
Superstition

✦ Why superstition?

- ✦ Gives the impression of control over one's life.
 - Lack of control & uncertainty create stress.
- ✦ Superstition is a stress management tool, as are many cultural practices.
 - For us, belief in science plays a similar (but perhaps diminishing) role.

“Step on a crack, break your mother’s back.”





Health

✿ Exercise regimens

- ✿ Can be seen as a means of developing physical balance and ultimately **equanimity**, a Confucian virtue.

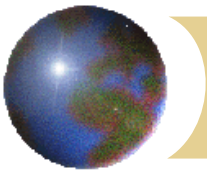
- **Chi gong** (*qìgōng*)
≈ energy exercise
(~3000 years old, revived in 1980s)
- **Tai chi chuan** (*tàijíquán*)
≈ supreme boxing



Morning chi gong in park



Tai chi chuan



Health

☯ Medicine

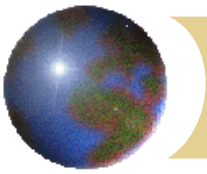
- ❏ A blend of ancient and modern.
- ❏ Chinese see no need to choose between “scientific” and “alternative” medicine.
 - **Try both** and see what works.
- ❏ “Explanation” takes a different form.



Chinese medicinal herbs



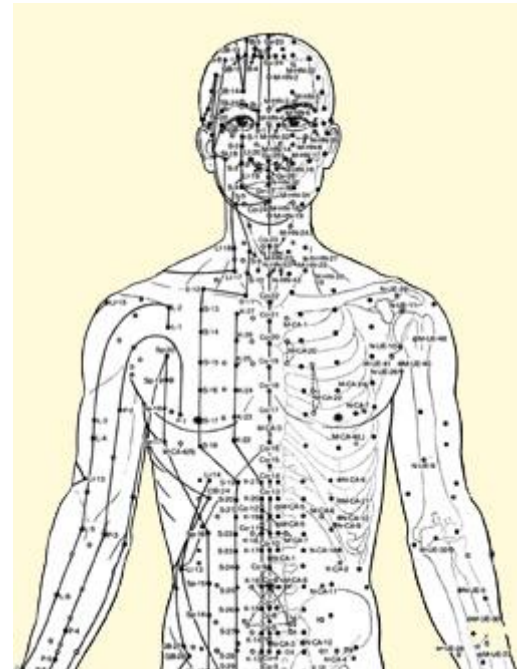
Chinese MRI machine

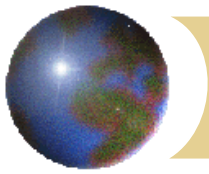


Health

☉ Acupuncture

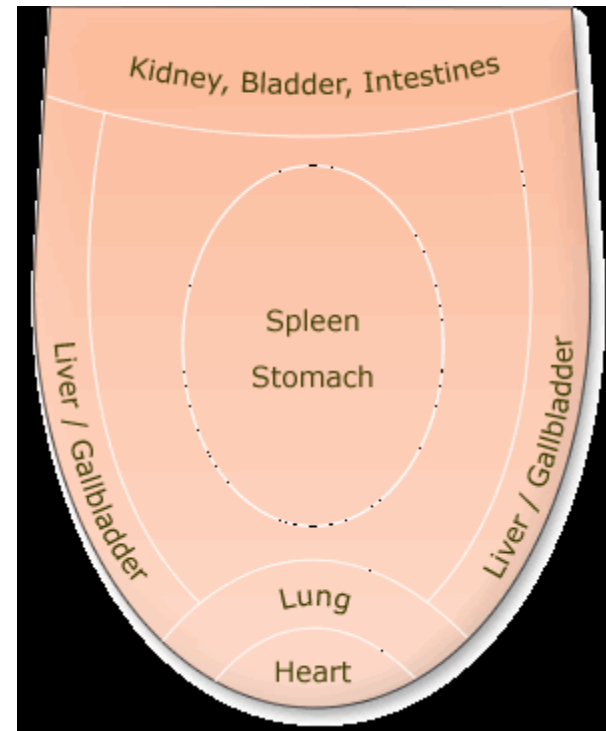
- ❏ Redirects *qi* along 365 meridians.
- ❏ *Qi* = energy, or negative entropy.
- ❏ No explanation in Western science.
 - Approved by FDA in 1996.
 - Endorsed by NIH for certain types of pain and nausea.
- ❏ Placebo effect?
 - Placebo effect is an **effect**.

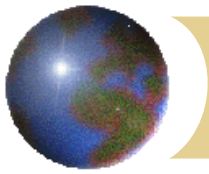




Health

- ❖ Tongue diagnosis
 - ❖ Some meridians reach the tongue.
 - ❖ Indications:
 - color, shape, features, moisture, coating, coat thickness, cracks, coat adhesion.
 - ❖ Still used today.
 - ❖ Conflicting views on reliability.





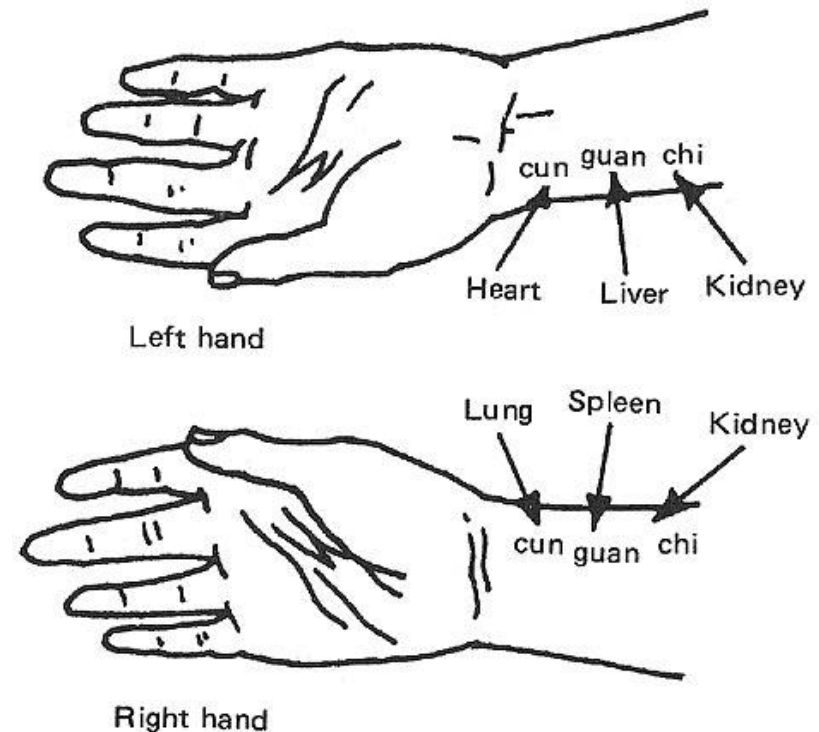
Health

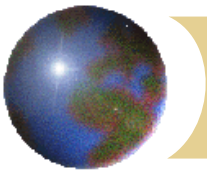
☉ Pulse diagnosis

☒ Many indications:

- Scattered, intermittent, swift, hollow, faint, surging, hidden, knotted, hurried, long, short, fine, hesitant, slippery, relaxed, moderate, tense, stringy, replete, weak, soggy, feeble, rapid, slow, sinking, floating.

- ☒ NIH finds that traditional pulse diagnosis has 70-90% reliability for certain conditions (e.g., hypertension)





Next...

- ✿ Fundamental role of individualism/collectivism
- ✿ Universalism (and its absence)
- ✿ Chinese philosophy, religion, ethics
 - ✻ Complementarity (*yīn/yáng*) vs dualism
 - ✻ Confucianism vs Daoism
 - ✻ Business ethics in a relationship-based society
- ✿ The Chinese diaspora

