Week 8 Discussion Guide:
Aging and the End of Life

Themes from this Week
- Aging
- Demographics and the “feminization of aging”
- Social exclusion and loss
- Women as caregivers

Before You Begin

Make sure to visit the Discussion Toolkit instructions page and read the instructions thoroughly to prepare for your meeting: http://bit.ly/IWHHR_Jan2015_Toolkit You do not have to answer all of the questions; this toolkit is to get the conversation started. The main purpose of meeting together is to have an engaged and thoughtful discussion of the issues.
Part I. Initial Response
Please discuss your personal reactions to the readings and videos from Week 8 on Aging and the End of Life. Describe one new idea or fact that you have learned from the course this week.

Part II. Topical Questions to consider with your group. We have left space for you to write down some of your thoughts as you meet with your group.

1. What does it mean to be elderly? Take one minute and write down a list of words or phrases that come to mind when someone says a person is “elderly” or “old.”

2. After you have finished, share your list with your group. Which words did you have in common and which words were unique to one or two members of your group?
3. Why do women make up the majority of the elderly? (See p. 234 From Outrage to Courage.) What are some of the features of aging, and are there challenges specific to women aging?

4. List the ways that you think elderly women draw assistance from society. Next, list the ways that you think elderly women contribute to society. What do these lists illustrate about people’s concepts of “productivity”? How “productive” are elderly women? Does this discussion bring to mind anything you discussed during Week 7 on Globalization & Women’s Work?

5A. How does your society treat elderly people and elderly women in particular? Have you personally witnessed what you described in answer to that question in your own life or in the lives of others? We encourage you to share these experiences with the group.
5B. Choose a culture different from your own. (For example, if you are from Europe, you might choose an example from an African or Asian country or if you are from Asia, you might choose an example of a Latin American country.) Do you think this society differs in how they care for the elderly? Why do you think such differences might exist?

6A. What are some of the characteristics that older women in poor communities share? A suggested starting place is to consult pp. 245-246 in From Outrage to Courage.

6B. Consider again elderly women in your community. Do they have similar or different experiences in comparison with the women described in the text?

7. We encourage you to talk about some ways that activists are working to create social change for the elderly. Could similar strategies be applicable in your country? What about the elderly themselves: are they able to be agents of change for themselves? To what extent do you think elderly people in your country are effecting positive change in the society in general?
Part III. Submit a Report

When you have finished, we ask you to share your group’s reflections with the IWHHR community. As a team, make sure to fill out the information needed for the Discussion Toolkit Report before you conclude your meeting.

Click on the “Discussion Toolkit” page for instructions: