Class Activities for **Chapter 11: Challenges and Rewards of Aging**

**Class activity #1**

Our Social Security system will not survive the way it is currently structured. It was never meant to be the sole source of income for the retired, but many are forced to use it as such. Social Security reform will likely continue to be a hot-button topic for every Presidential election until something major is done about the funding crisis. At this point by some estimates, there are only about three working Americans per retired worker, and as the Baby Boomers move into retirement, we will approach a 2 to 1 ratio.  
Split the class into groups and give them a handout of the following alternatives to the current system. Which do they think is the best? Do they have a better idea? Discuss as a full class when the group discussions have finished.  
  
a. Use euthanasia for those in a nursing home who meet both of the following conditions: (a) have no chance of returning to society, and (b) sincerely express (for at least a two-month period) a wish to die.   
  
b.  Encourage older adults to continue to work as long as they are productive.  With this approach, working older adults would be paying into the Social Security system rather than taking benefits out of it.  
  
c.  Cut Social Security benefits by 30% for all current retirees.

d. Raise the retirement age (when one can receive full benefits) by a year every three years (roughly the rate at which our life expectancy is increasing).  
  
e.  Make all income subject to Social Security tax. (In 2014, people who made over $117,000 paid no Social Security tax on anything they make after the first $117,000.)

f. Abolish Social Security, encouraging people to invest and save by giving them the opportunity to do so tax-free.

**Class activity #2**

The chapter mentions the Big Five personality inventory. If you have access to a computer lab, you can have the students go to this website: <http://www.outofservice.com/bigfive/> There, they can take an online version of the test to see their own results. They can print out their results and get into groups to discuss and compare. Encourage them to compare their results to the discussion in the text of what particular traits lead to longevity.

If you do not have access to a computer lab, print out the test at the following link and either have the students score them in class or hand them in, allow you to score them, and receive them back in the next class for discussion: <http://personality-testing.info/printable/big-five-personality-test.pdf>

**Class activity #3**

Write the following questions on different areas of your chalkboards, whiteboards, or some easel paper. Provide chalk/markers for students to use as they walk around the class responding to each of them as honestly as possible. Each student should write something in response to each statement (provided you have enough space—otherwise, adjust instructions as necessary). After everyone has had time to respond to the questions, go around to each question, choosing some of the responses to stimulate conversation, relating the discussion to topics in the chapter.

What is a popular stereotype about older adults?

What is a fear you have for yourself about becoming older?

When have you experienced an older person defying stereotypes?

How do you feel about nursing homes?

What would you do if your parent(s) needed long-term care?

How do you expect to pay for retirement, and when do you expect to retire?