Study Guide on Chapter 17: The Politics of Aging (February 27th)

This chapter provides an overview of political activism among the elderly, and political debates about the aged. These are the questions to focus on:

- What are the voting patterns and preferences of older Americans?
- What are the major interest groups that represent older Americans, and what have they accomplished?
- What social movements have older Americans participated in?
- What concepts have been used in debates about government spending on the aged?

Assignment: Write a 1-2 page response to one of the following questions:

1. What do you think is the single most pressing political issue for older Americans?
2. The “gray lobby” has been advocating prescription drug coverage for the aged for some time. What interest groups might oppose such legislation? Would some older Americans belong to those interest groups?
3. Today’s older Americans tend to engage in the same kind of political activity they did when they were younger. When the baby boom generation retires, what kind of political activity can we expect to see from them? Be specific.
4. Now that Americans are living longer, should there be an upper limit on the age of candidates for high public office? Why or why not?
5. Do you think children in the United States deserve the same degree of support from their government as the aged? Explain your reasoning in sociological terms.

Internet Resources Related to the Politics of Aging:

1. The Alliance for Retired Americans (an AFL-CIO affiliated organization) (http://www.retiredamericans.org)
2. The Gray Panthers (http://www.graypanthers.org)
3. AARP (www.aarp.org)

In class, we will also discuss: Ken Dychtwald’s Age Power: How the 21st Century Will Be Ruled by the New Old (New York: Tarcher/Putnam) and Robert D. Putnam’s Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community. (New York: Simon & Schuster).

Remember that your Informational Interviews are due on March 6th. We will also be meeting in LIB112 on March 6th, so that we can explore Internet resources for your projects. It may be helpful to bring a diskette with you, so you can save files for home use. You will also be able to email articles to your home email.