Discussion Questions: July books
The Michelle R. Clayman Institute for Gender Research

How the French Invented Love: Nine Hundred Years of Passion and Romance
by Marilyn Yalom

1. Though French ideas about love have changed over time, what seems to remain permanent? Put differently, what still seems relevant to you?
2. Yalom claims that love is "feminized" in France. What does this mean, and is it similar or different in your own country?
3. In the "Note to Readers," Yalom mentions that for the French, “Love simply doesn’t have the same moral overlay that we Americans expect it to have.” Taking cultural differences into consideration, how do you define your own expectations of love?

The Outsourced Self: Intimate Life in Market Times
by Arlie Russell Hochschild

1. Hochschild points to important changes in outsourcing over the last several decades. What's changed—in who uses paid services, the degree of specialization, the role of technology, and the language in which services are offered?
2. According to Hochschild, today Americans are between a rock and a hard place. For domestic needs, we can't go back to the community of yesteryear (the ethic of "just do"), as these days most women are in paid work. At the same time, we don't enjoy European-style public services such as generous paid parental leave or paid family care leave, and so the market is our main alternative. How much community support or public services can we call on today?
3. When Hochschild writes of the invisible work we do to "keep personal life personal," what does she mean, and how do we do it? What does Hochschild mean by "empathic reach," "back-channeling," and "take backs"?
4. Hochschild writes of developing certain terms of emotional engagement. We feel we should be emotionally attached to this activity but emotionally detached from that. According to what set of norms do we decide to "attach here" and "detach there"?

Grandmother Power: A Global Phenomenon
Paola Gianturco

1. An unheralded activist grandmother movement is underway internationally. Activist grandmother groups are effectively tackling barriers to economic, social, and political justice worldwide. Why do you think this movement is developing more slowly in the U.S. than, for example, in Canada?
2. Pretend you are speaking to all 40 million US grandmothers in a giant stadium. There they are—younger, better educated, healthier, and more work-experienced than they have ever been. Many are Boomers who came of age in the 1960's and are experienced at changing the world. They agree that our troubled world is not good enough for their grandchildren. What issues would you ask them to tackle? What arguments would you mount to convince them?