ONLINE EDUCATION: TEACHING IN A TIME OF CHANGE

• Paper / Proposal Title:
Exploring One’s Community in a Pandemic World

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• Abstract (300 words):
For the last decade and a half, I have been teaching various iterations of a popular general education course, URBN 1300: Exploring Your Community, geared towards introducing students to new ways of seeing their communities as well as enticing them into our Urban and Community Studies major. Under normal circumstances, the course is taught ‘on the ground,’ with field trips layered on top of one another as we traverse the downtown surrounding the campus of the University of Connecticut/Waterbury. These field trips have included urban infrastructure [including an excursion into storm sewers], architecture, walkability, the importance of ‘third places,’ immigrant/ethnic merchants and nonprofit groups in revitalizing deindustrialized cities such as ours, and a variety of other topics. Since the pandemic began, the course has been reconfigured to allow students to explore their own communities, present their results, and comment on other student projects and observations both synchronously and asynchronously. This presentation will explore the shift from in-person to online learning in a course that teaches students to appreciate their communities’ assets and to become civic actors engaged in improving their communities rather than leaving them behind. The presentation will include visuals and quotations from student work and suggest ways in
which this newly-configured experiential course can be carried out even when students are not present together in a physical classroom.

• Author(s) Biography (200 words each):

Ruth Glasser is an Associate Professor in Residence in Urban and Community Studies at the University of Connecticut. She received her Ph.D. from Yale University in 1991. She is the author of My Music is My Flag: Puerto Rican Musicians and Their New York Communities, 1917-1940 (University of California, 1995), Aquí Me Quedo: Puerto Ricans in Connecticut (Connecticut Humanities Council, 1997), the co-author of We Are the Roots: The Organizational Culture of a Home Care Cooperative (Center for Cooperatives, University of California, 2002), the co-editor of Caribbean Connections: Dominican Republic (Teaching for Change, 2006), and the author of a variety of other chapters and articles on Latino migration and immigration. Since 1991 she has worked on a variety of public history projects including oral history projects, exhibits, curriculum materials, and video documentaries. She frequently incorporates public history projects into classroom teaching.