



ATLANTIC  
HISTORY

**UCLA**



Join us on **Thursday, May 23, 2024**, for our Atlantic History Talk with **Melissa Morris**

**Hybrid event**

Bunche Hall 6275 & [Zoom](#)  
Thursday, May 23rd, 2024  
12:00-1:30 PM

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## **'Pirates which infest that coast': Illicit Trade and Imperial Rivalry in Seventeenth-Century Western Hispaniola**

This presentation considers the illicit trade of tobacco and other goods from Western Hispaniola. French, Dutch, and English ships came in the 1560s to trade with the diverse groups living there—Indigenous, Spanish, and African. In response, in 1605-6, western and northwestern Hispaniola and other centers of tobacco cultivation were depopulated. The Spanish forcibly resettled residents, burned their towns, and issued a decree banning tobacco cultivation. These harsh measures, however, were far from the end of the island's tobacco trade, or of interlopers' presence. Some residents refused to move, and they were now joined by French and Dutch buccaneers. By 1630, they had several tobacco plantations in western Hispaniola. This chapter relies upon documents in several languages and from diverse archives to tell the story of the Spanish illicit trade and depopulations, the subsequent rise of interlopers who were loyal to no empire, and the eventual takeover of western Hispaniola by the French.

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Melissa N. Morris is a historian of early America and the Atlantic World and an Assistant Professor of History at the University of Wyoming. Melissa is particularly interested in the cross-cultural interactions that defined colonial encounters, the role of plants in driving European expansion, the dissemination of geographic and agricultural knowledge, and colonial failures in the Americas. She completed her PhD in history at Columbia University in 2017, and her current book project, "Cultivating Colonies: Tobacco and the Upstart Empires, 1580-1660," considers how tobacco helped the Dutch, English, and French establish empires in the Americas