In this talk, Dr. Payton analyzes the political causes and social impact of urbanization patterns in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, in the 1970s. Drawing from archival and cartographic sources, she shows how the chronic flooding that now regularly occurs in the city’s low-income neighborhoods had its origins in an elite-driven construction boom that disrupted the city’s fragile watershed. This micro history provides an opportunity to theorize how political and economic vulnerabilities in Haiti, exacerbated by the Duvalier dictatorship (1957-1986), generated physical structures and social geographies of inequality that would come to define the city. Dr. Payton also shows how issues of risk and exposure to environmental hazards in Port-au-Prince fit within a wider set of questions about the meaning of freedom and equality in post-colonial and post-emancipation contexts.