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## Crusaders with a Conscience? Encounters with Ethics and Violence in the Early Thirteenth Century

Wednesday 3 June 2020 4:15–5:00pm

School of History Zoom Seminar Series

Speaker: Megan Cassidy-Welch, University of Queensland

Meeting ID: 917 2529 0104

Password: 380597

URL: <https://anu.zoom.us/j/91725290104?pwd=a1l2UnNML2pzZURRaEQ0K1UrSTNHdz09>

This paper will explore how crusaders decided what constituted legitimate and illegitimate conduct in combat. Although the scholarly literature on *ius ad bellum* and crusading motivations is large, the question of *ius in bello*, or conduct within war, calls for more analysis especially outside of philosophical and jurisprudential contexts. In the thick of battle, what influenced decisions about conduct? What constituted what we would now call an ‘atrocious’ act in war, and what was considered to be war’s ‘ordinary violence’? How do the narrative sources represent such acts, and why?



Historians have argued that in group settings people succumb to pressures and commit actions they would never do of their own volition; that ‘ordinary men’ will defer to authority, adapt to group activity, and create narratives about their actions that they can live with in order to explain atrocities committed. Others have identified individual disposition to violence, poor command discipline, novel situations, understandings of the need for group cohesion, and the emotional upheaval of transitioning from combat to aftermath as influencing behaviours. Others again identify the cultural contexts in which war is carried out as influencing the nature of its violence – the dehumanising of enemies, hatred, vengeance, the breakdown of moral authorities that would normally limit violence, the feeling that one can ‘get away with it’, and so on. These ideas can be useful for understanding the cultural landscape of the crusades. By looking at accounts of various early thirteenth-century sieges and their aftermath, this paper will particularly explore the treatment of ‘civilian’ populations, incidents of rape, and acts of mercy. I will use the sieges of Toulouse, Damietta, and Constantinople as case studies in order to think about how cultural conventions of violence were played out or abandoned, and how cultural vocabularies of violence were created and disseminated in relevant narrative texts.



**Professor Megan Cassidy-Welch** is the author and editor of several books on medieval memory, space and place, and the Crusades, mostly recently *War and Memory at the time of the Fifth Crusade* (2019), *Remembering the Crusades and Crusading* (2017), and *Crusades and Memory* (2015). She is the McCaughey Chair of History at the University of Queensland, Head of the School of Historical and Philosophical Inquiry at UQ, a Fellow of the Royal Historical Society, past President of the Australian and New Zealand Association of Medieval and Early Modern Studies, and founder of a humanities and social sciences research network at UQ on *Women and Power*. Her current project is on the concept of atrocity in medieval warfare, particularly during the thirteenth-century Crusades.

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