



Towards a History of Ancient Gaza

Professor Michael Champion, Institute for Religion and Critical Inquiry



Michael Champion studies the cultural and intellectual history of the ancient Mediterranean. He is the author of two books on the intellectual, cultural and religious history of late-antique Gaza and the co-editor of books on Hellenistic violence, emotions history, and reshaping classical traditions in Christian late antiquity. He is also an investigator on an ARC DP project studying language education across different traditions of classical languages. He currently oversees research as ADR in FTP, teaches ancient history in the School of Arts, and is a member of the Biblical and Early Christian studies team in ACU's Institute for Religion and Critical Inquiry.

Abstract: The last detailed history of ancient Gaza was published nearly 40 years ago, focusing on the Roman to early Byzantine periods. Since then, new archaeological work and a series of excellent studies especially on aspects of late antiquity have been produced. I am embarking on a new project to offer a history of Gaza from Alexander the Great to the beginning of the Muslim period and a related collaborative study of the history of Palestine and Palestinian peoples. This talk lays some of the groundwork for these projects. Gaza's strategic position has long made it a prize for all the major empires of the region, and the city has seen conflict and brutal violence across its history. But its location also helped to generate its prosperity, in bringing together diverse peoples; boosting its economy as a trading centre for the spice trade, luxury wine, and other agricultural produce; in shifting landscapes of religious memory and pilgrimage; in public displays and festivals like the long-running Festival of Aphrodite of the Rose; and as a renowned centre for education and literary production. In this talk, I will position a new study in the context of earlier historiography, survey some aspects of the source material and the difficulties involved in the distribution and variety of sources across the timespan of the study, and share some early thinking on models for narrating Gaza's history in this period.

Join us!

CONVENORS

Professor Nell Musgrove (NSAH)
Dr Sarah Bendall (IHSS)

DATE & TIME

Wed 1 October 2025, 1pm AEDT

IN-PERSON VENUE

MEL-412-1-01, Arts Precinct
36-38 Brunswick Street, Fitzroy
(access via Graham St)

VIDEO LINK

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