

# GRS 349: Jews and Christians in the Greek and Roman World

Fall 2025    TWF    11:30 am-12:20 pm

Professor Gregory Rowe



This course looks at the history of Jews and Christians in the ancient Mediterranean world, from the aftermath of the fall of Babylon and the return of Jewish exiles to Jerusalem in the 5th century BC to the Roman emperor Constantine's conversion to Christianity and the Nicene Council of AD 325. Special focus on the background and consequences of the Maccabean Revolt of 167-164 BCE, when many of the defining features of the modern world—ethnic nationalism, fundamentalism, religious intolerance and persecution, martyrdom—were born, and a messianic spirit became predominant among Jews.

## Learning Outcomes:

- ✓ Jewish and Christian history as history from below—history from the point of view of the victims
- ✓ religious and cultural change—how Jews were partly Hellenized, Greeks were partly Judaized, and Romans were Hellenized and Judaized when they were Christianized
- ✓ a range of source material, much only recently discovered—the Elephantine papyri, the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Masada papyri, the Gnostic papyri from Nag Hammadi, and the archives of Bar Kokhba, leader of a Jewish revolt against Rome, and of Babatha, a refugee from the revolt
- ✓ scholarly debates—the reliability of Old Testament accounts of Jewish history, the origins of the Maccabean Revolt, why Rome crucified Jesus and persecuted Christians, when Jews and Christians parted ways, and the steps leading to Constantine's conversion

