

Josephus' *The Jewish War*: A Military and Religious History of the Battle for Jerusalem
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Course Aims

Josephus' *The Jewish War* documents, from the author's perspective, every aspect of the Jewish revolt against Rome from 66-70, which concluded with the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Temple. The war between Judea and Rome can be seen as a series of military episodes, to be analyzed from the perspective of military history; and it can be understood as embodying a clash between paganism and monotheism, between two very different religious, moral, and cultural worldviews. Recently, two works of scholarship have analyzed these aspects of the Revolt. Martin Goodman, a scholar of the classical world and an authority on Josephus, has delineated the clash of cultures between Judea and Rome in his book *Rome and Jerusalem*; and military historian Guy Maclean Rogers has discussed the military elements in his important work *For the Freedom of Zion*. The goal of this seminar is to pair the reading of the Josephus' *The Jewish War* with these two recent important works, joining a vital classical text with modern scholarly ones. As the seminar proceeds, we will be assess some of the following questions: Why military mistakes were made by Jewish leaders of the Revolt, and what might have been done differently? What role did internecine infighting play in the fall of Jerusalem? What were the social, religious, and intellectual conflicts that lay at the heart of the outbreak of the Revolt? How does our enhanced understanding of Jerusalem's geography and archeology allow us to better understand what occurred during the war two millennia ago? And what lessons from the Revolt are most relevant today?

Course Structure and Grading Procedure

Every weeks, readings will be assigned in advance from both Josephus and one of the modern scholarly works; and a written reflection on the readings will be required. The written reflections will be in response to essay prompts and questions about the reading, and the reflection will be assessed by the instructor based on whether it reflects that the student has carefully read the assigned readings. A final term paper will be required at the conclusion of the semester; here, original and creative insights will be expected, rather than merely a summary of what was studied in class. This paper must focus either on a theme in *Rome and Jerusalem* or *For the Freedom of Zion*. If a student chooses the former, the paper should address one of the central cultural or religious clashes between Rome and Judea, either expanding on Goodman's approach, or critiquing it. The paper must be 20 pages and feature both textual analysis and a study of relevant scholarship. If the student chooses to focus on a theme in *For the Freedom of Zion*,

Grades will be assigned based on the following structure: 1/3 attendance; 1/3 reading responses; and 1/3 final paper.

Weeks 1-3: A introduction to Rome and Judea in the First Century CE

Readings: *The Jewish War*, books I and II, selections; *Rome and Jerusalem*, CHAPTER TWO: One World Under Rome CHAPTER THREE: Diversity and Toleration; CHAPTER FOUR: Identities CHAPTER SIX: Perspectives

Weeks 4-6: The Leadership in Jerusalem, the War in the Galilee, and the Making of Josephus

Readings: *The Jewish War*, books III and IV, selections; *For the Freedom of Zion*, Part II, “The War in the North,” selections.

Weeks 7-12: The Battle for Jerusalem

Readings: *The Jewish War*, books V and VI, selections; *For the Freedom of Zion*, Part III, “A Tale of Two Temples,” selections.

Weeks 13-14: Rome and Judaism in the Aftermath of the Destruction

The Jewish War, book VII, selections; *Rome and Jerusalem*, Chapter 12, “Reactions,” Epilogue, “The Origins of Anti-Semitism.”

Bibliography

Josephus, *The Jewish War*, trans. William Whiston

Martin Goodman, *Rome and Jerusalem: The Clash of Ancient Civilizations*. Vintage (November 11, 2008)

Guy Maclean Rogers, *For the Freedom of Zion: The Great Revolt of Jews Against the Romans, 66-74 CE*. Yale University Press (2022).