

**LLC Syllabus**  
***Peaky Blinders: Crime, Bolshevism, Politics, Workers’  
Rights and the Irish Question in  
Great Britain, 1919-1922***

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**When?** Thursdays, 10:00 am – 12 noon, Temple Beth-El  
June 23-August 18, 2022  
*NOTE: no class on July 7; July 21 class will run from 9:30-11:30*

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**Course Description** *Peaky Blinders* is a six-season BBC/Netflix drama (2013-2022) which, in the tradition of *The Godfather*, focuses on a crime family over the years. The Shelbys start off as bookies and working-class thugs in Birmingham, England but family leader and World War I hero Thomas Shelby has higher aspirations. In this class we will watch the first two seasons of the TV show (a total of 12 episodes) and discuss both the show and the history (1919-1922).

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**Viewing** You will view two episodes a week of *Peaky Blinders*; there are a total of 12 episodes in Seasons 1 and 2. The series is available for streaming on Netflix. In addition, about a dozen copies of seasons 1 and 2 can be found at various branch libraries in RI. (Check the Ocean State Libraries catalog or your local library.)

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**Format**

Each week participants will view two one-hour episodes at home, and come to class prepared to discuss. Each participant will be expected to lead a 45-minute class segment—either on the two episodes themselves or on a facet of history that complements the themes in those episodes.

I recommend you watch each episode twice—once to just appreciate it and let it flow, and once looking for the nuances—taking notes and thinking more analytically, stopping and backing up as needed.

The closed caption option is useful if you are having difficulty catching all of the dialogue. I personally watch ALL British television with closed captions on!

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**Choosing and  
Preparing Your  
Topic**

If you are discussing the show, you can look at any or all of these topics: plot, script, character development, acting, costumes, sets, cinematography, and music. You may discuss only the two episodes for that week or you may discuss the through-line of a particular element as seen in the CURRENT episodes or in the PREVIOUS weeks' episodes. Please do not discuss any elements of episodes to be discussed in FUTURE classes.

If you are discussing the history, you may choose from the topics included in the schedule below. In order to present the material in a sequence that makes sense, and enriches your enjoyment of the show and its content, I'd like to address each topic on the date it is scheduled. If there are two topics listed for the week, you may talk about both of them, or do a deeper dive into one of them. Remember the reporter's questions for each of these topics: who, what, when, where, why, and how.

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**Guidelines for  
History  
Presentations**

Your session should be no longer than 45 minutes in length (including at least 15 minutes of questions and discussion time).

There are many different formats you may use for your session. You are welcome to do a PowerPoint presentation, or to use flip charts or handouts. Or you may wish to point the class ahead of time to an article or video that helps to illustrate your topic, and then manage a discussion of it. You may wish to send some discussion questions out to the class ahead of time.

Please use relevant research material from a variety of sources—not just a Wikipedia article. Use your own words. And please try not to read your presentation. It's OK to work from notes, but be sufficiently familiar with the material that you can take a breath and make eye contact with the class!

Please have a plan for involving the class, and stimulating discussion, whatever format or topic you've chosen. If you want to send material to the class ahead of time, you can send it yourself, or you can send it to me and I will forward to the class. If you plan to do this, please try to get this information to your classmates as early as possible (ideally at least 5-6 days ahead.)

Audiovisual support (whether it's video, photographs, drawings, maps, musical recordings, etc.) will help to tell your story.

I encourage you to consult LLC's guidelines for session leaders which you can find on this page:

<https://www.lifelonglearningcollaborative.org/resources-for-class-members-session-leaders/>

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**Guidelines for TV  
Show  
Presentations**

Your session should be no longer than 45 minutes in length (including at least 20-25 minutes of class discussion time).

If you've taken a film or theatre class before, you probably have an idea of how to analyze a theatrical presentation. If you have not, there are plenty of websites that will give you guidance on how to analyze a film. (Analyzing a TV series is much the same, only the story arcs are different—with each episode having its own arc and also contributing to the arcs of the season and the series as a whole.)

Here are some of the elements you may wish to look at—but you don't need to look at ALL of them! Focus on what stood out to you when you watched the episodes.

- plot
- script
- character development
- directing/acting
- costumes, sets, and special effects
- cinematography (including lighting, camera angles, closeups vs distance shots, etc.)
- music
- narration
- atmosphere, mood, tone
- symbols, motifs, themes
- arc of the episode: setup, conflict, resolution
- how the opening scene sets up the rest of the episode

If you want to show one or more short clips from a particular episode, please jot down the minute/second of the places where you want to start and stop. (Make sure to write down the minutes elapsed, not the minutes remaining.) I will bring up Netflix in the classroom and will position it at the correct spot for you to show your clip.

PowerPoint or the equivalent presentation tool is usually not needed. Prepare discussion questions, be prepared to show film clips and encourage the class to analyze them, remark on the things YOU noticed and see if the class agrees/disagrees, point out elements that really interested you, etc.

Perhaps there is a short YouTube video on “the making of” an episode or an interview with an actor, director, etc. that would be interesting for the class to view and discuss.

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**Guidelines for TV  
Show  
Presentations  
(cont.)**

If you are showing clips from the episode or YouTube videos, keep those segments short so there is plenty of time for discussion.

Think most specifically about what made these episodes effective drama and effective television.

The class has ALL watched the episodes and will want to participate in the discussion—make sure to facilitate this!

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**LLC Policies/  
Procedures**

**Food:** Food is not allowed in the classrooms. Beverages are allowed but must be covered.

**Parking:** Do NOT park in any assigned spaces in the Temple lot. Vehicles parked in assigned spaces will be towed at owner's expense.

**Cancellations:** All information about class cancellations for any reason (including weather) will be emailed to the class by the coordinator. Please do not call the Temple Office.

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Class	Date	Topic	Presenters/ Discussion Leaders
1	June 23	Introduction of class members (Why did you select this class? What do you know about the topic?) <u>Introduction to class</u> Introduction to the real Peaky Blinders and other Birmingham gangs	<u>Cathy Hurst</u>
2	June 30	HISTORICAL TOPIC: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• World War I shellshock (PTSD)</li> <li>• Birmingham industry ca 1919-1920; 1919 strikes around the world</li> </ul> VIDEO: Season 1, Episodes 1-2	<u>Shared class assignment</u>  <u>Cathy Hurst</u>
	July 7	NO CLASS – TEMPLE CLOSED	
3	July 14	VIDEO: Season 1, Episodes 3-4  HISTORICAL TOPIC: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• British and Birmingham government in this period. Who was the King? The Prime Minister? How did the government function? What was Winston Churchill doing? What was the Birmingham government like? What was the role of the police?</li> <li>• Romani/Irish gypsies; Charlie Chaplin was Romani</li> </ul>	<u>unassigned</u>  <u>Martin Saltzman</u>
4	July 21	<i>NOTE: This class will run from 9:30-11:30 am. Please be on time!</i>  VIDEO: Season 1, Episodes 5-6  HISTORICAL TOPIC: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Bolsheviks; the aftermath of the Russian Revolution in Europe; Russian support for strikers</li> </ul>	<u>Deborah DeCoteau</u>  <u>Stephen Kaplan</u>

5	July 28	<p>VIDEO: Season 2, Episodes 1-2</p> <p>HISTORICAL TOPIC:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The role of women in the early 1920s in Britain; social changes, growing independence for single women; women and work; suffrage</li> <li>• World War I units—the tunnelers, the Birmingham Rifles</li> </ul>	<p><u>unassigned</u></p> <p><u>Ellen Ober</u></p>
6	Aug. 4	<p>VIDEO: Season 2, Episodes 3-4</p> <p>HISTORICAL TOPIC:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Irish question—the Fenians, the IRA, the Treaty, the Ulster Volunteer Force, the Irish Civil War</li> </ul>	<p><u>unassigned</u></p> <p><u>Mark Guyer</u></p>
7	Aug. 11	<p>VIDEO: Season 2, Episodes 5-6</p> <p>HISTORICAL TOPIC:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Class issues in Britain in the first three decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century</li> <li>• Horse racing and gambling in Britain in the early 1920s</li> </ul>	<p><u>unassigned</u></p> <p><u>Marilyn Kaplan</u></p>
8	Aug. 18	<p>Wrapup discussions, leftover topics, class social time (TBD based on COVID status!)</p>	<p>TBD</p>