INST 201

History Part II

What does History tell us?

Can we “learn from history?”

*“Those who fail to learn the lessons of the past are doomed to repeat it”*

Does the author of the history chapter in our text agree??

No. He doesn’t.

Why?

Reasons History can’t be our guide

1. Hegel – the lesson of history is that we don’t learn the lessons of history.
2. Different versions of history

written by “the victors”

subjectivity

benevolence of one’s own side assumed; guided by moral reasoning; values

victims of others’ aggression, imperialism

providential views of history

American Exceptionalism

Martyrdom, victimhood as a national story

Poland, Ireland, Serbia

1. Revisionist history

bottom up view

1. Constructivist view of history

no single true narrative

competing narratives

each society, each regime writes, remembers, reinterprets, promulgates

Author shows how these competing views of history animate seemingly intractable conflicts such as Israel-Palestine, the Cold War and US-Russian relations today

have been used to justify ethnic cleansing, genocide (Holocaust, Bosnia, Kosovo)

So, what is a thinking person to do?

Throw out history, historical accounts as partial and unreliable?

Explanation vs. Understanding

“International studies not only employs an interdisciplinary approach to global issues but also recognizes that many independent or interdependent forces can influence human behavior and ‘cause’ historical events.” (32)