

Why study history?

Tony Scarlatos

CSE ISE 301

Some famous perspectives...

- "History is a set of lies agreed upon." - *Napoleon Bonaparte*
- "History is written by the victors." - *attributed to Winston Churchill*
- "History is just one damned thing after another." – *Arnold Toynbee*

- "What's past is prologue." - *William Shakespeare*
- "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it." - *George Santayana*
- "All great historical facts and personages occur, as it were, twice ... the first time as tragedy, the second time as farce." - *Karl Marx*
- "The only thing new is the history you don't know." - *Harry Truman*
- "History doesn't repeat itself, but it often rhymes." - *Mark Twain*

Benefits of studying history:

- History helps us understand people and societies
- History helps us understand change and how the society we live in came to be
- History contributes to moral understanding
- History provides identity
- Studying history is essential for good citizenship

- from the American Historical Society

<http://www.historians.org/pubs/free/WhyStudyHistory.htm>

My reasons for studying history:

- Improving critical thinking skills
 - Gathering and assessing evidence
 - Identifying bias, resolving conflicting accounts
 - Determining patterns and trends
 - Making projections and informed decisions
- History is fun
 - The most fascinating characters and stories
 - The mystery, the joy of discovery, and the thrill of making connections

An example of practical application:

- In 1980 IBM contracted with Microsoft to develop PC DOS for about \$80K. The contract also included developing a version of BASIC that would run on their new platform. It was a one time fee – IBM would not pay any further royalties or license fees. Out of this sum MS also had to license Q DOS from Seattle Computer Products for about \$25K. So why did MS accept such a meager sum for so much work?
- Bill Gates said that he had learned from *history* that the trend was for hardware to be reverse-engineered (cloned) and that his company would recoup its investment by licensing its OS to clone manufacturers. Sure enough, Compaq released an IBM clone in 1982, and MS DOS went on to become the predominant operating system in the world, with about 90% of the market.

What will *you* learn from the history of computing?

- History is more about asking the right questions than providing the correct answers.
- Where is computing headed?
 - Artificial Intelligence?
 - Big Data?
 - User Experience?
 - Crowd Sourcing?
 - Social Commerce?
- What's the next big thing?
 - Investment opportunities
 - Employment trends
 - Impact on society

Computing history is an ideal subject for all majors

- History is an interdisciplinary subject, and increasingly so is computing.
- For better or worse, we all live in the “information age”, which impacts our lives socially, politically, and economically every day.
- None of us are just mere observers or consumers. Our choices more than ever affect the world around us. We are producers as well.
- How well informed our choices are will help to optimize outcomes in this new era.