

**Duane Clark**

**Conference Summary**

**March 13 – 15, 2015**

**Princeton University: Common sense and the Enlightenment**

Part 1: a description of the activity and how it impacted student learning and success.

This conference addressed themes in philosophy during the enlightenment with a specific focus on David Hume, Adam Smith, Thomas Reid and other satellite thinkers of the era. One aspect of the conference that I found helpful was that they focused on contextualizing and connecting the philosophical ideas of these thinkers to the socio-economic and political realities of their day. This kind of information truly feeds my class and enhances learning. Students see philosophers as real people like themselves and I use that perspective to challenge the class to seek application of ideas and methodologies to their own lives.

Another general idea that was explored in the conference focused on the idea of enlightenment and the devolution of the enlightenment. I integrated a version of this topic into class discussion this semester asking students what they thought of 18<sup>th</sup> century ideas on the subject and how might we address enlightenment in the face of contemporary education and modern technology. Student participation with both of these related materials were vibrant. I believe by adding in an emphasis on nature of the enterprise of the enlightenment and context students begin to see some relevance and application to philosophy.

Part 2: a description of how the knowledge and experiences were shared with colleagues with a description of the evaluation and feedback received about the presentation or workshop.

Philosophy and Religion at UHMC is a small discipline two members strong consisting in Joshua Wyant, who serves as an adjunct instructor, and myself. Following the conference Josh and I met on Tuesday 3/31 and discussed a variety of topics relevant to our classes. One of the issues I shared with Josh that feeds both our philosophy and religion courses were on the role of the church in ushering in the enlightenment. Many resources pit the church against philosophy and science as a hallmark of the enlightenment. However, the research presented at this conference provided strong evidence that the church (Presbyterian church in particular) played a key role in education reforms and mass literacy that fueled the enlightenment. Joshua found this material interesting and as our meeting was one on one the evaluation and feedback was incorporated into dialog.