Humanities 4: Lecture 13
Immanuel Kant
“What is Enlightenment?”
Outline of Lecture

• Historical Background
• “What is Enlightenment?”
  - Main claim
  - Public vs. private use of reason
  - Political Analysis
• Summary
Prussia in 18th Century

• Rise of Prussia
  - Efficient bureaucracy & tax collection, large standing military (83K-200K), potatoes.

• Series of kings:
  - Frederick I (1688-1713), Fredrick William (1713-40), Frederick II=Frederick the Great (1740-86)

• Seven Years’ War (1756-1763) (See slide)

• Enlightened Absolutism
  - Freedom of religion
  - Limited freedom of speech
What is Enlightenment?

- Main claim:
  - “Enlightenment is man’s emergence from his self-incurred immaturity”
  - Immaturity - inability to use understanding without others
  - Self-incurred - if due to lack of resolution and courage

- Causes:
  - Laziness and cowardice
  - Dogmas and formulas - “mechanical instruments for rational use”

- Remedy: (internally) courage, (externally) freedom
Kinds of Freedom

- Public vs. private use of reason
  - Private use is in some official capacity
  - Public use is for the “reading public”.
- Consistent with obedience in actions
- Emphasis on religious freedom
  - Religious immaturity is most pernicious.
- Political freedom is also included.
- Fundamental dignity of man.
  - vs. man as machine (part of state)
Political Analysis

- Repeated Flattery
  - Enlightened ruler with no fear.
  - “the century of Frederick”
- Assurances of no danger
  - Strong army provides security.
  - Enlightenment should be gradual and not take form of revolution.
- Advantages
  - Possibly better ways of legislation.
  - People emerge from “barbarism”.
Summary

- Self-conscious attempt at understanding the Enlightenment.
- Freedom of speech in the public sphere is essential.
- Reason should provide the standards for public discourse.