In the first weeks of this class, we have discussed the concept of the history of sexuality. Write a short critical response paper (3-4 pages) in which you explain the problems inherent in defining and identifying sexual identity (as it relates to the category “homosexual,”) OR sex/gender identity (“intersex”), particularly in light of the essentialism/social construction debate. Whose position do you find the most compelling, and what are the political implications of these theories?

Your essay is an opportunity for you to reflect on one or more key concepts through a close critical reading of one text, or a comparison of two. You may wish to pursue a theoretical question in more detail in your critical response paper. It is not necessary to comprehensively critique every perspective.

Possible Questions/Topics to Address:

- The “birth of the homosexual” – when? What defines a homosexual?
- Medical discourse and the pathologization of non-heterosexual (queer) sexual practices/identities
- Medical discourse and the pathologization of non-normatively sexed bodies
- Distinction between sexual practice and sexual identity – the cultural construction & meaning of sexuality, from ancient Greece to the present day
- Capitalism and its impact on sexuality
- Third sex, inverts, and sexual aberrations – compare Krafft-Ebing’s case studies to Somerville’s discussion of the scientific racism. Do you see evidence of her argument in these examples?
- Sexuality and social construction – are “homosexuals” born or made?