

Queer Theory Response Paper Two

Deadline: Tuesday, November 1

Having thought a lot about the *definition* of homosexuality, we are now broadening our scope of inquiry to think about sexual identity from different (and often competing perspectives). Scientists, historians, and psychoanalysts each have their own take on sexuality, and whether it is a constructed or innate phenomenon. For next week, I would like you to put two or more of the essays we have read in conversation with each other, and write a **short critical response paper (2-5 pages)** in which you address the question of sexual identity as it has been theorized and/or exemplified by those texts.

A good strategy might be to take a concrete example offered in texts such as Halperin, Vinicis, Newton, or Nanda, and relate it to theories advanced by Foucault, Freud, Herdt, Sedgwick, Jagose, or others.

Alternatively, you may opt to discuss the implications of one or more theoretical positions on sexuality for gay political movements, such as the question of gay marriage.

Possible Questions/Topics to Address:

- **What problems are specific to lesbian historiography? How do they relate to the debate between gay essentialism and deconstruction?**
- **What are some implications of Freud's model of separating sexual aim from sexual object choice?**
- **Is there a gay gene? How would the discovery of one impact gay liberation, and/or the gay marriage issue?**
- **Third sex, inverts, and sexual aberrations – is a “third sex” category useful? Does it help us escape the trap of “true sex” based on a dimorphic system? What are the pitfalls?**
- **Sexuality and social construction – are “homosexuals” born or made?**
- **Queer identity as a challenge to previous theories of homosexuality**
- **Issues of community and identity – what does the Cherry Grove example illustrate about gay and lesbian culture(s)?**