

SP.406 – Sexual & Gender Identities
Response Paper One

Deadline: Tuesday, October 4

In the first weeks of this class, we have discussed the concept of the history of sexuality. Write a **short critical response paper (2-5 pages)** in which you explain the problems inherent in defining and identifying “homosexuals,” and outline the conflicting views of several of the social constructionists we have read so far. You may use *The Children’s Hour* and the discussion around *The Scotch Verdict* as a cultural example of how the definition of homosexuality becomes pivotal to censorship and the social control of sexuality.

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 raised in our MIT server discussions or in class in more detail in your critical response paper.

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**
- **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**
- **Sexuality and social construction – are “homosexuals” born or made?**