Look Inside. Both highly praised and intensely controversial, this brilliant book produces dramatic evidence that at one time the Catholic and Eastern Orthodox churches not only sanctioned unions between partners of the same sex, but sanctified them—in ceremonies strikingly similar to heterosexual marriage ceremonies.

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Same-Sex Unions in Premodern Europe by John Boswell: | : Books

At a time when strictures against homosexuality are the subject of impassioned debate, this groundbreaking work of scholarship has generated extraordinary controversy. For in Same-Sex Unions in Premodern Same Sex Unions in Premodern EuropeYale historian John Boswell, one of our most respected authorities on the Middle Ages, produces extensive evidence that at one time the Catholic and eastern Orthodox churches not only sanctioned unions between partners of the same sex but sanctified them—in ceremonies that bear striking resemblance to the heterosexual marriage ceremonies.

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Sort order. This book blew my mind. As a historian of Roman religion, early Christianity and the Medieval Church, I never dreamed that the documents he's uncovered would actually exist out there.

He's unearthed actual Christian liturgy for same-sex unions, prayers and blessings that couldn't be clearer about giving sanction to the spiritual bond between two people of the same sex the same way the Church does for opposite sex couples.

As logical evidence in the current debate, this feels like "game, set, match" when you read it. View 1 comment. This huge work of scholarship brings to light pre-modern documents concerning heterosexual marriages and same-sex unions.

Don't be fooled by the title! Our modern sense of the phrase "same-sex unions" sometimes gets interpreted as "same-sex marriages," which really isn't the case with this book. Sure, there may have been same-sex unions that entailed more than strong friendship or spiritual unity, but reading this book made me realize how diluted our sense of friendship - and how uneducated our knowledge of marriage - can be. This book covers ancient attitudes on men and women, as well as the history of marriages and ceremonies, from the pre-Christian era through to modern times and would be of great interest to heterosexuals wanting to know more about the strange history of wives, concubines, prostitutes, slaves, and everything in between.

This work includes how attitudes have differed between ancient civilizations concerning love, marriage, and the distinctions and sometimes non-distinguishations Same Sex Unions in Premodern Europe hetero- and homosexual love and unions. As with all of Boswell's work, there is a tremendous amount of footnotes - well worth reading - and many different languages are brought into the entire discussion as well as thoughts on proper translations all incredibly fascinating.

In the back, there are pre-modern Christian ceremonies for both heterosexual marriages and same-sex unions that have been translated and could actually be used for anyone interested.

This is another piece of Boswell's work that leaves you with an incredible depth of knowledge and appreciation. Highly recommended. This book is a Same Sex Unions in Premodern Europe tome for those used to reading academic texts that regularly delve into the original Greek, Hebrew, or other source languages.

For Same Sex Unions in Premodern Europe, someone who is not used to being steeped in the arcana of ancient text research, this was a tough read. That said, I enjoyed what I got out of it. And the writer was a preeminent scholar at a renowned institution, so he was well within his scholarly milieu in composing this text in the 90s.

The biggest revelation here was that not only did sa This book is a short tome for those used to reading academic texts that regularly delve into the
This book is also very interesting for the light that it sheds on marriage customs in general, homosexual and heterosexual.

paints a different past than we are accustomed to think of. The details of what two brothers or sisters?

But the simple fact that formal religious recognition of unions between Same Sex Unions in Premodern Europe of the same sex existed already

same sex unions included, you know, sex. Some view Boswell skeptically. Long story short, traditional Roman Catholic practice clearly included same-

to the fourteenth century. The past may not be as we imagine it. Reading around a bit you can discover that some reviewers question whether these

The author documents the origins of same sex marriage customs, their variety, and the beginnings of a process of repression which seems to date

and overlap.

It gets dense, but the point is that same sex relationships have existed since ancient days. A side point is that marriage has not always been based

on love and for procreation - conveying land, title and privilege among the monied classes was paramount at various points.

Also, statuses other than marriage, including taking a concubine, were seen as the way to pursue a love interest or to satisfy one's sexual urges not

marriage, that was a business relationship. Diversity is the word I keep coming back to; people organized themselves in a surprising diverse array

of relationships. Also, class plays a huge role in this - slaves weren't allowed to participate in some ways; the poor in others.

The epilogue is by far the most accessible part of the book. The author provides a "concluding observation" It is not the province of the historian to
direct the actions of future human beings, but only to reflect accurately on those of the past. This gets me. We have not been reflecting accurately

on the same sex relationships of our past.

We do our present and our future a disservice. Whatever we have been, in some sort we are still," observed C. Lewis in a related context. Recognizing that many--probably most--earlier Western societies institutionalized some form of romantic same-sex union gives us a much more accurate view of the immense variety of human romantic relationships and social responses to them than does the prudish pretense that such "unmentionable" things never happened.

And to that I say, Amen. It's a damn shame, as I cannot imagine what he would have brought to the scholarship and popular discussion in the 21

years that have passed. Read his obituary in the NY Times here. View all 3 comments.

Jan 30, Brian Childs rated Same Sex Unions in Premodern Europe really liked it Shelves: sexualityhistory. I both appreciated and was annoyed by

how academic the book was. Boswell made the case that the facts he presented were accurate, but by being so meticulous and detail focused he

made a book that was difficult to become immersed in. Mar 05, John David rated it really liked it Shelves: modern-historysociologymedieval-or-

renaisssace-historyreligion.

In these books, he makes the cumulative argument that, counter to many modern ideas about the reception of homosexuality in the Catholic

Church, that as late as the twelfth century, clergy showed no particular concern Same Sex Unions in Premodern Europe disdain toward the

subject, and even openly celebrated same-sex unions.

Boswell Same Sex Unions in Premodern Europe the book claiming that this kind of research is made particularly difficult for philological and

cultural reasons. For example, similar words were often deployed for very different reasons. The Same Sex Unions in Premodern Europe words

agape, storge, filia, and eros all speak to distinctly different kinds of love, but their usages Same Sex Unions in Premodern Europe often idiomatic

and overlap.

He then drives home that the historical motivations for marriage highly diverge from the ones that we all but assume today. Most of these changes

occurred before Christianity did; if anything, Christianity devalued marriage by emphasizing its role as a worldly — and therefore inferior —

relationship.

Boswell goes on to document what these ceremonies actually consisted of the joining of hands, the crowning of heads super gaythe taking of

Communion, and readings from Scripture, all Same Sex Unions in Premodern Europe which we know to be central parts of many medieval

heterosexual marriage ceremonies. If it was, do we have any reason to think that other people in society looked upon these kinds of marriages as

anything like normative heterosexual Same Sex Unions in Premodern Europe These are more interpretive questions and therefore almost

necessarily must have less conclusive answers, but Boswell certainly wants to encourage the reader to believe that they were.

The evidence that the book puts forward may or may not fully supported the claims that it makes, but it opens interpretive doors that make it much
easier to imagine just how fluid and organxe the past, present, and future really are. If this book is any sole indication, Boswell almost certainly did

not fully make his case, but he may well have achieved something much more important in choosing to investigate what was thought to be long-

settled social and cultural history.

And that, for any serious historian, should be considered a moral imperative. Nov 30, Miles rated it it was amazing. Long story short, traditional

Roman Catholic practice clearly included same-sex unions of some sort. The evidence seems massive and unmistakable.

The author documents the origins of same sex marriage customs, their variety, and the beginnings of a process of repression which seems to date
to the fourteenth century. The past may not be as we imagine it. Reading around a bit you can discover that some reviewers question whether these

same sex unions included, you know, sex. Some view Boswell skepti Long story short, traditional Roman Catholic practice clearly included same-

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But the simple fact that formal religious recognition of unions between Same Sex Unions in Premodern Europe of the same sex existed already

paints a different past than we are accustomed to think of. The details of what two brothers or sisters?

This book is also very interesting for the light that it sheds on marriage customs in general, homosexual and heterosexual.
Past historians encountering these manuscripts have usually interpreted the same-sex ceremonies as honoring a spiritual bond or friendship, rather than a marriage equivalent. Boswell argues these readings overlook the ceremonies' striking resemblances to heterosexual nuptials in terms of the vows as well as the use of symbolic objects such as crosses, veils, crowns, and sometimes swords. In addition, both heterosexual and same-sex ceremonies usually involved the joining of right hands.

He maintains Same Sex Unions in Premodern Europe when other historians have neglected these parallels, they have done so out of a combination of homophobia and fear.

Same-Sex Unions represents extraordinary scholarship, copiously detailing premodern rituals, laws, and value systems.

The footnotes are as absorbing as the text, often providing crucial context or opposing viewpoints. Boswell is admirably attuned to the elusive subtleties of language and the dilemmas of translation, especially when it comes to matters of the heart; we are apprised of the multiple meanings and possible nuances of Greek words for friend, lover, kiss, brother, companion, etc. Appendices contain the original ceremony texts, accompanied by Boswell's translations. Well worth the attention of anyone with a serious interest in the social and spiritual history of love and marriage.

Not an easy read but an essential one. Title notwithstanding, this latest from the National Book Award—winning author is no guidebook to getting woke. Kendi ; illustrated by Ashley Lukashevsky. A clear and candid contribution to an essential conversation.

After devoting most of the book to talking, Oluo finishes Same Sex Unions in Premodern Europe a chapter on action and its urgency.