

The Sciences of Homosexuality in Early Modern Europe

The Sciences of Homosexuality in Early Modern Europe investigates early modern scientific accounts of same-sex desires and the shapes they assumed in everyday life. It explores the significance of those representations and interpretations from around 1450 to 1750, long before the term homosexuality was coined and accrued its current range of cultural meanings.

This collection establishes that efforts to produce scientific explanations for same-sex desires and sexual behaviors are not a modern invention, but have long been characteristic of European thought. The sciences of antiquity had posited various types of same-sexual affinities rooted in singular natures. These concepts were renewed, elaborated, and reassessed from the late medieval scientific revival to the early Enlightenment. The deviance of such persons seemed outwardly inscribed upon their bodies, to be documented in treatises and case studies. It was attributed to diverse inborn causes such as distinctive anatomies or physiologies, and embryological, astrological, or temperamental factors.

This original book freshly illuminates many of the questions that are current today about the nature of homosexual activity and reveals how the early modern period and its scientific interpretations of same-sex relationships are fundamental to understanding the conceptual development of contemporary sexuality.