Final Paper Assignment

Write a paper that addresses one of the two following topics.

1. During the final section of the course, we have encountered several variants on the charge that theorists of religion prior to the 1970s construed religion in ways that downplayed its connection to its historical and cultural context, and thus from politics and power. In your paper, first present this charge as it is articulated by one of the more recent works from our syllabus. Then choose two theorists from among the possible targets of this accusation (Schleiermacher, Müller, Otto, Eliade, and Geertz) and assess the accuracy of the charge. That is, assess whether these theorists construe religion in a way that divorces religion from power. State your assessment clearly and document your claims with references to the texts.

2. Both Lata Mani and Saba Mahmood display an awareness of problems in the ways ‘religion’ has been construed as an object of study by scholars. In your paper, describe how religion, and specific religious traditions, are treated in these two books. What significant differences do you see between the way religion figures in each work? With what critical issues in the study of religion does each author display familiarity, and what impact does awareness of these issues seem to have on their respective projects? Document your claims with references to the texts.

Requirements and recommendations:

Your paper should be 8-10 pages in length, double-spaced. Use 1” margins and a 12-point font. Number your pages.

Write concisely. Do not pad your paper with unnecessary prose.

Make sure your writing is grammatically and syntactically correct. Make use of the Writing Center if you need help in doing so.

Check your paper over carefully for spelling and typographical errors before turning it in.

Make sure your paper addresses the assigned questions.

Papers are to be turned in to my office, 208 Chapin Hall (under the door if I am not in). Students from the Other Four Colleges may submit their papers by email.

NOTE: if you wish to receive your paper with comments, include a self-addressed envelope with the hard copy of your paper. Five College students who email their papers should submit an envelope ahead of time.

Due date: Wednesday, May 11, 4:00 PM