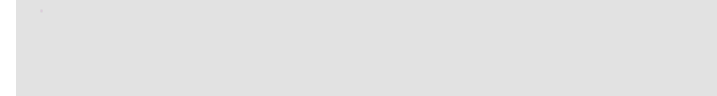




Naval Academy midshipmen seek Satanic Temple space

By [Geoff Ziezulewicz](#)

Oct 15, 2019



A sign stands outside of an entrance to the U.S. Naval Academy campus in Annapolis, Md., on Jan. 9, 2014. (Patrick Semansky/AP)

A group of U.S. Naval Academy midshipmen who follow [The Satanic Temple](#) religion recently asked for the storied naval institution to accommodate their faith like any other.

But in a nod to internet virality and pushing a message before the boss has signed off, officials in Annapolis have been doing a little clarifying since an Oct. 8 internal email leaked out proclaiming that “Satanic services” would soon be offered on the campus.



That email was, of course, posted to the military-themed “[drunkoldgrad](#)” Instagram account and you can probably imagine what happened next.

Cmdr. Alana Garas, an academy spokeswoman, has been tasked with clarifying.

Those midshipmen who follow The Satanic Temple — an IRS-recognized, tax-exempt religion — were just asking for a “study group space,” not for a sacrifice stage or to burn a pentagram into Ingram Field or to erect a giant horned icon in front of the Zimmerman Bandstand.

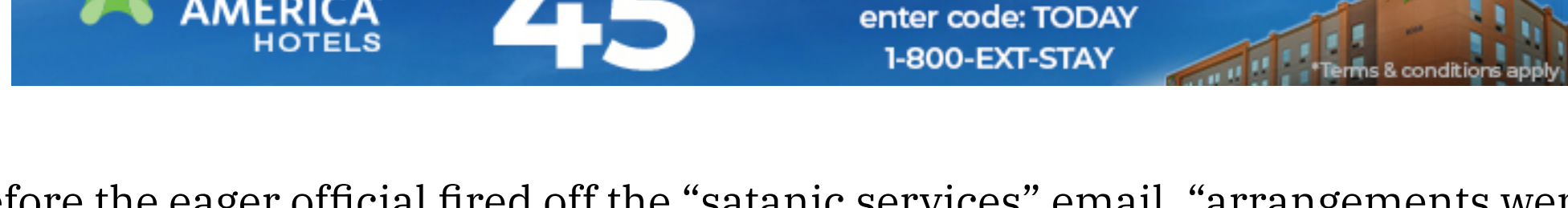


“A group of Midshipmen with beliefs aligned with those practiced by The Satanic Temple...requested a space where they could assemble to discuss and share their common beliefs,” Garas said in an email. “The request was for a ‘study group’ space, not for holding ‘satanic services.’”

Garas added that the email went out prematurely before Chaps signed off on it.

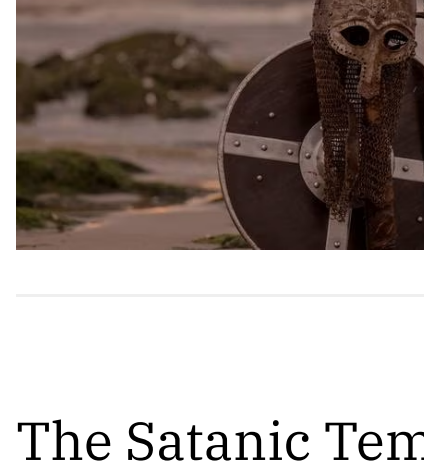
She also cautioned students who follow the “politically active” religion from participating in its political side, lest it appear that their actions are endorsed by the Pentagon.

“Midshipmen have the right to assemble to discuss their beliefs as they choose, but, to be clear...military members will not engage in partisan political activities, and will avoid the inference that their activities may appear to imply DoD approval or endorsement of a political cause,” she said.



Before the eager official fired off the “satanic services” email, “arrangements were being made to provide the Midshipmen with a designated place to assemble as chaplains facilitate the beliefs of all service members, a responsibility outlined by Navy instructions,” Garas said.

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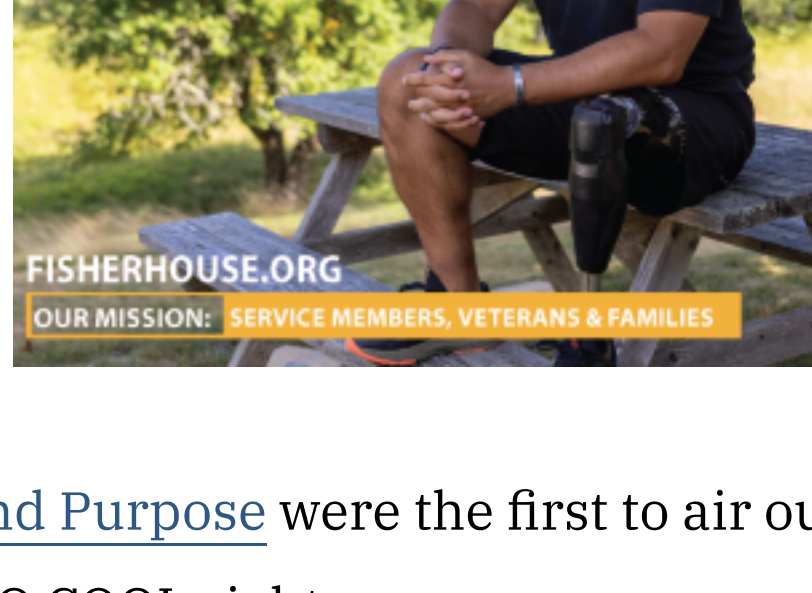
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The Satanic Temple doesn't believe in Satan or “magick,” according to its website.

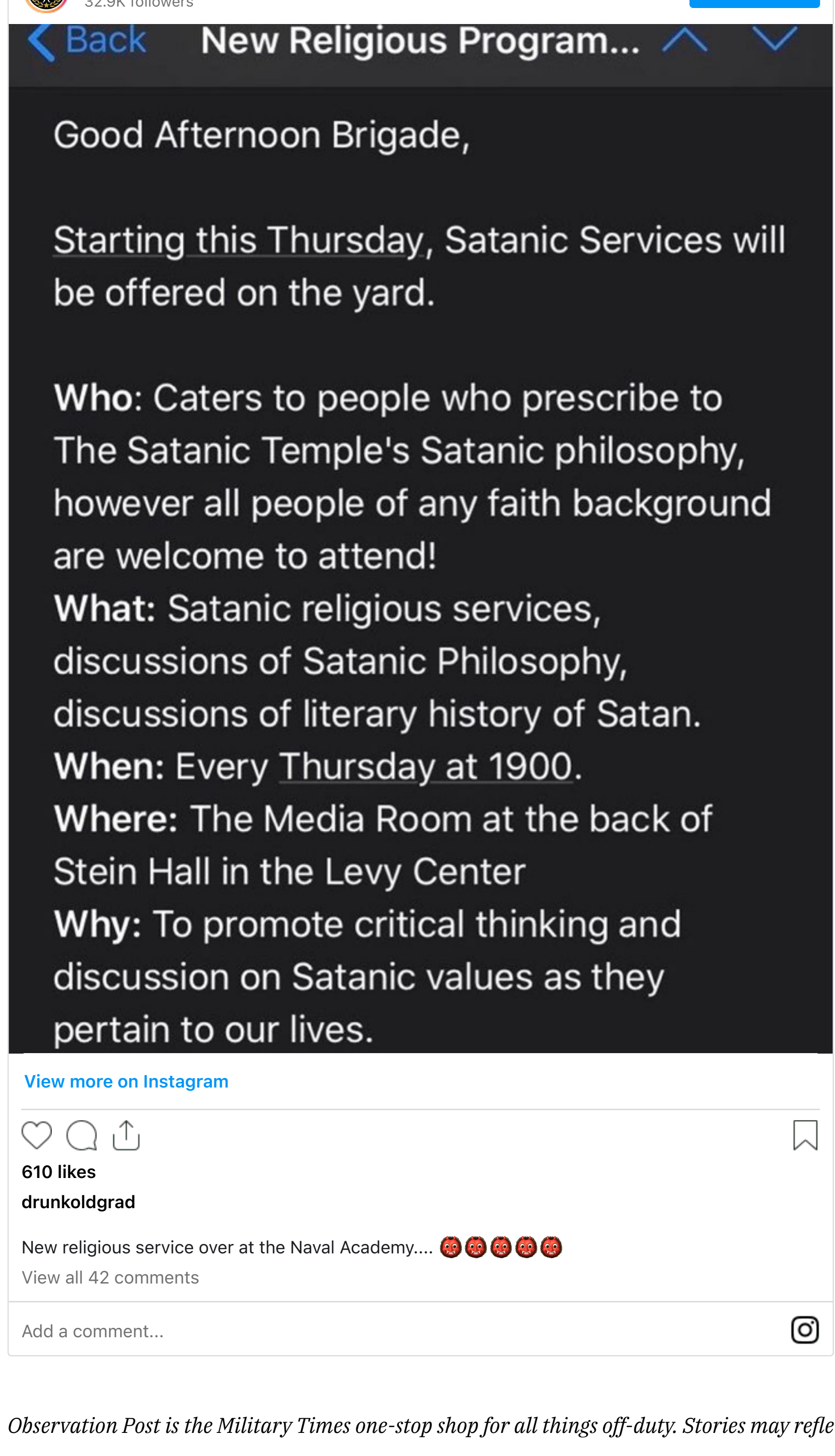
Its tenets include striving to act with reason-based compassion and empathy for all creatures, and prioritizing justice over laws and institutions.

The religion, which formed in 2013, also stresses individualism and a live-and-let-live ethos.



Our frienemies at [Task and Purpose](#) were the first to air out this minor cluster ... [Jared Keller](#) thinks he's SO COOL right now.

Are you a midshipman? What have you seen or heard about The Satanic Temple in Annapolis? Hit me up, I'll keep you anonymous: geoffz@militarytimes.com.



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About [Geoff Ziezulewicz](#)

Geoff is a senior staff reporter for Military Times, focusing on the Navy. He covered Iraq and Afghanistan extensively and was most recently a reporter at the Chicago Tribune. He welcomes any and all kinds of tips at geoffz@militarytimes.com.

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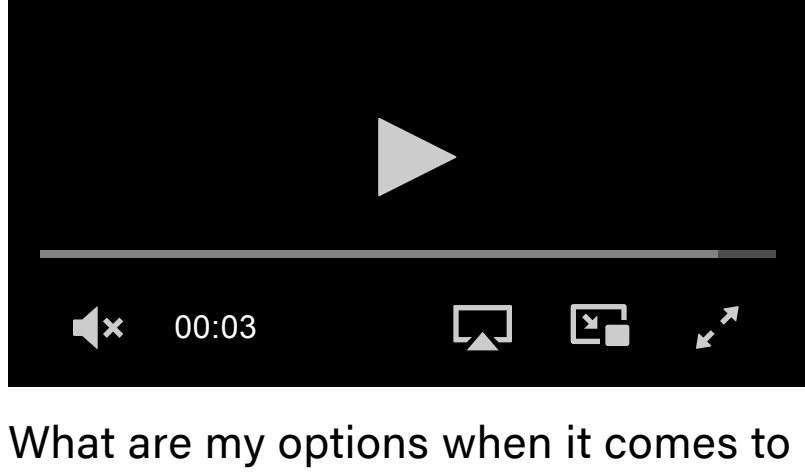
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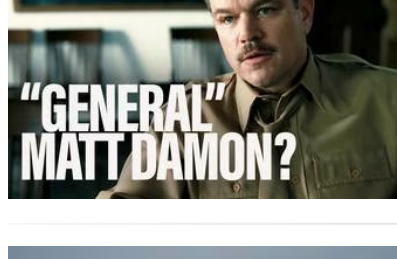
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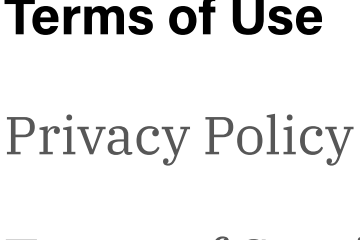
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