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# American Constitutional Faith and the Politics of Hermeneutics

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**Abstract:** As more debates in American politics become constitutional questions, effective citizens must engage in constitutional interpretation. While most Americans venerate the Constitution as a part of a national, civil religion, levels of constitutional knowledge are also very low. In this paper, we analyze how ordinary Americans approach the task of constitutional interpretation. An analysis of two cross-sectional surveys indicates constitutional hermeneutics are a product of both political factors, denominational affiliation, and biblical interpretive preferences. We also present the results of a survey experiment where the manipulation of a clergy's interpretation of a biblical passage affects how respondents interpret both scripture and the Constitution, providing a causal mechanism for learning how to engage in hermeneutics.

**Bios:**

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