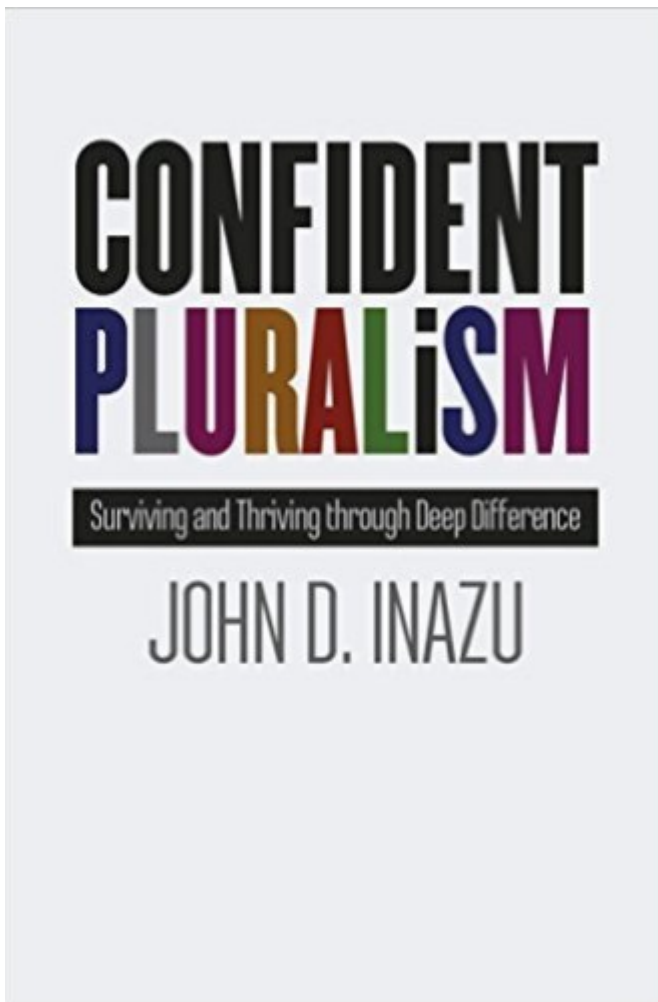


At the same table

by [John C. Danforth](#) in the [October 12, 2016](#) issue

## In Review



### **Confident Pluralism**

by John Inazu

University of Chicago Press

John D. Inazu's *Confident Pluralism* invites us to reflect on what has gone wrong in American government and in our polarized and paralyzed country. It reclaims the Madisonian idea that strongly held differences of opinion and values are inherent in

our nation's life and require both legal protection and public respect.

Inazu, who teaches law at Washington University in St. Louis, writes as both a constitutional scholar and an engaged citizen. He calls for enhanced protections for those who express unpopular opinions. He addresses the weakening of the First Amendment right of assembly, and he calls for restraint in the government's use of power in confronting protests such as those in Ferguson, Missouri. He argues that while government may have the power to impose its policies against the practices of religious groups—for example, by withdrawing tax exempt status—it should generally refrain from doing so.

More than advocating legal protections for dissenters, Inazu calls for a public attitude of respect for opponents, especially when there are strongly held disagreements. When we advocate our own positions, we should exercise tolerance, humility, and patience. He suggests that we attempt to find common ground with our opponents by building personal relationships—by sharing meals, for example. This is an especially useful idea for members of Congress who spend little personal time together, and who know each other principally as either political allies or foes.

Holding together a diverse nation of strongly held interests has been the great American project since our beginning. Inazu calls us to make it our project today.

*Read all of the responses to "A book I'd like my elected officials to read" [here](#).*