



# Allman Family Lecture 2016

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## **Fear and Loathing - Political Neuro-Biology and the 2016 Elections**

John Alford, Rice University



**What can burrowing mice and African bonobos tell us about Donald & Ted & Hillary & Bernie? Aristotle famously observed that “man is by nature a political animal” and that “a social instinct is implanted in all men by nature”. Few students of government or politics have taken this assertion seriously; however, a recent twin study concluded that roughly half of the variance in political ideology is attributable to genetic influences. Apparently Aristotle was correct. Follow-up studies have identified two particularly salient neurological variations that show a clear connection to political beliefs and behaviors – disgust and threat response. Both are ancient brain systems, but both have very modern implications.**

**Join Professor John Alford as he delves into the deep ideological divisions that are shaping the 2016 elections.**

John R. Alford is a Professor in the Department of Political Science at Rice University, where he has taught thirty years. He received his PhD in Political Science from the University of Iowa. His early research was mostly in the area of elections and voting behavior with an emphasis on the US congress - but his interests have always been eclectic, and he has published in areas as diverse as coal mine safety, and pro-natalist policies in Eastern Europe. He has also been active as a consultant and expert witness in the area of redistricting and election law.

His current research focuses on the biology of political behavior, including neuroscience and genetics. His work in this area has been funded by the National Science Foundation and published in major journals including *Science*, the *American Political Science Review*, and *Political Psychology*. He is also a co-author of the recent book *Predisposed: Liberals, Conservatives, and the Biology of Political Differences*. The findings have been widely reported on in the popular media including the science section of the *New York Times*, *Forbes*, the cover of *New Scientist* and other outlets ranging from *CSPAN's Washington Journal* to the *Rush Limbaugh Show*.

*Thursday, October 20<sup>th</sup> 2016*

*5:00 p.m. Reception, 5:30 p.m. Lecture*

*McCord Auditorium, Dallas Hall*