

# Math, Productivity, Happiness & Decision-making

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Wednesdays, 5:00–6:00pm, 740 Evans
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Mar 7      **Anna Salamon, SIAI**

*Stop rationalization: the “what fooling yourself feels like” game*

Rhetoric and reasoning can be hard to separate, even in our own thoughts. Without even knowing it, our brains can shift from *figure-out-the-truth* mode to *make-up-reasons-for-X* mode. This second mode is called *rationalization*. It causes problems all the way from grocery shopping to career choices, and from superstitions to serious personal and political conflicts. Decades of research in psychology on confirmation bias has shown that rationalization is even a built-in part of our most rudimentary heuristics. How much do we rationalize? When? How can we tell? How can we stop? Today’s seminar is about learning not to fool ourselves.

*This week (and every second week) we’ll go out for dinner after the seminar.*