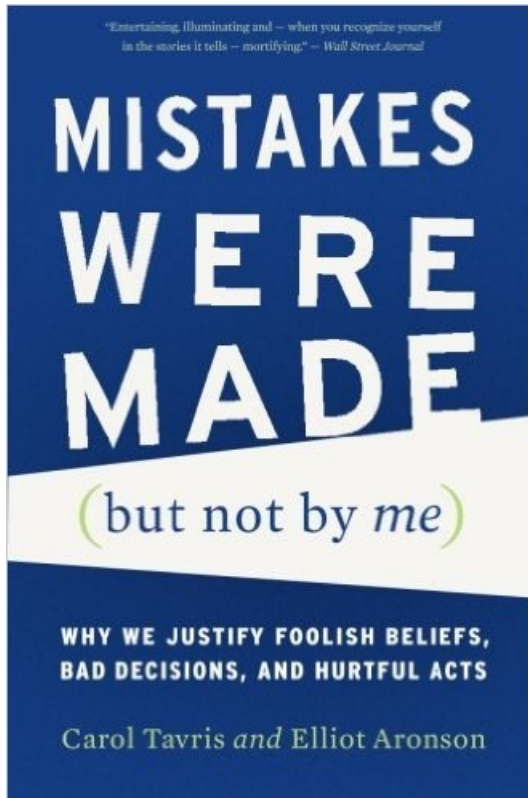


The ATA Advisor Book Club (ABC)

The Winter 2017 Advisor Book Club will feature a discussion of **“Mistakes Were Made (but Not by Me): Why We Justify Foolish Beliefs, Bad Decisions, and Hurtful Acts”** by Carol Tavris and Elliot Aronson

From the NACADA Book Review by James Creech, First Year of Studies, University of Notre Dame:



“Every academic advisor has worked with students who will not accept responsibility for their failures. Every academic advisor has seen students stubbornly pursue ill-chosen majors. *Mistakes Were Made* provides an engaging and accessible explanation of the psychological processes underlying these behaviors. While the authors do not explicitly address higher education, their insights can fruitfully inform advising practice.

Carol Tavris and Elliot Aronson synthesize a large body of social psychological research on self-justification. This research shows that the need to reduce cognitive dissonance, “a state of tension that occurs whenever a person holds two cognitions . . . that are psychologically inconsistent” (p. 15), leads people to justify their behavior, however illogical or unethical.... This self-justification allows the perpetrator to reconcile the belief that he or she is a good person with the fact that he or she has hurt someone. The authors acknowledge that dissonance reduction has some positive outcomes, such as the maintenance of a coherent sense of self, but they focus on the damage that self-justification can cause individuals, relationships, and institutions.

In addition to an explanation of the authors’ theory, further chapters discuss how self-justification is abetted by other psychological distortions, such as confirmation bias (the acceptance of information that confirms one’s opinion and the dismissal of information that does not), naïve realism (the belief that one perceives the world accurately), and the selective and reconstructive nature of memory. These enlightening chapters are excellent reading for students and advisors alike and discussion can be expanded to other realms such as politics and marriage. For advisors, the chapters on failures in the mental health profession and the criminal justice system offer cautionary examples of the dangers of overconfidence in professional expertise and experience.

ABC Discussion of **“Mistakes Were Made”** will be at the April 21

Advisor Training Academy “Lunch and Learn”

Noon-1:30pm

UGL Community Room, 3rd floor

Copies of the book can be reserved by emailing

Kate Bernas (ab9599@wayne.edu)