Connecticut College American Studies Senior Seminar  
“The Globalization of American Culture” Book Review

Author: Charles Andrew Ferguson.  
Title: “Crazy U: One Dad’s Crash Course in Getting his Kid Into College”  
Publisher: Simon and Schuster, 2011  
Reviewed by Dawson Luke

Everyone can remember back to their senior year when tensions were elevated, high SAT scores were a must, large envelopes came with fear, and your college counselor was more like your own personal psychiatrist. It is these times that Author Andrew Ferguson writes about in his book “Crazy U: One Dad’s Crash Course in Getting his Kid Into College.” His take on the college process is one that you have never heard before, and it will make you laugh both hysterically and often. He does, in fact, give a serious take on issues in the college process, such as fairness of the SAT, the population of minorities at prestigious universities, and the availability of tutors. He does this in a calm and fun-loving way that is not necessarily political yet still very informative. As he says in the first sentences of the book, “College Admissions in America is a big sprawling subject, but this is not, you’ll notice, a big sprawling book. It’s one parents view, the process seen from beginning to end through the prism of a father’s own flesh a blood.”

What makes this book both pleasurable and easy to read is that it talks about a time in which I can deeply relate to after just going through the process five years ago. One of my favorite topics of discussion is the horror of going to take your first SAT test. Ferguson writes about the fear and anxiety that comes with that day, but not because of the test itself. He says students these days, “None of them had gone four hours without sending a text message.” It is his quirky take on a usually serious process that will keep the reader hooked. He also takes the SAT himself, and in his eyes does horribly, to the
point where he will not reveal his math score. All he says about the result of his test is that it is “somewhere below lobotomy patient’ but above Phillies fan.’ “ He talks about the $40,000 dollar college tutor, whom he actually goes to hear talk at the headquarters of a private investment bank, and only works with “high net-worth individuals.” These countless stories of college visits, admissions officers, huge guide-to-college books, and SAT tutors will make you snicker at the severity of the college progression (and also, perhaps, remind you of your own experience).

Never once does he refer to his son by name in the book, and he refers to his target school as “BSU,” which stands for Big School University. Besides the lack of name for both his son and the school, Ferguson gives a very personal account of his own experience. The book is not necessarily for everyone, but it is perfect for students and parents who are either going through the process or have recently gone through the process. You will be happy to know by the end of the book that his son does just fine, and gets into a good school. If anyone has true fear of the college process this is a good book to pick up as it shines the experience in a positive light with great comic relief.