

**COMM 344:**  
Strategic Communication Writing  
Department of Communication  
310 Strickler Hall  
University of Louisville  
**SPRING 2015**

**PROFESSOR:** Karen Freberg, Ph.D.

**CONTACT INFORMATION:** karen.freberg@louisville.edu (best way to get in contact)

**OFFICE:** 305B Strickler Hall

**OFFICE HOURS:** 1 PM – 2 PM MW, or by appointment

**CLASS MEETING TIMES:** MW 2:00-3:15 pm in 309 Strickler Hall

### **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

**Strategic Communication Writing** will build upon basic knowledge of audience analysis and media selection from earlier courses to develop higher-level writing skills across multiple media platforms – traditional, digital, and social. The goal for this course is to teach students how to write in a variety of media with clarity, insight, and skill. Through in class and homework writing assignments, students will be given constant practice in developing solid persuasive writing abilities necessary for professionals entering fields commonly associated with public relations and advertising.

Some assignments will cover the essentials of news and the basic building blocks of providing information. Some assignments will include elements designed to provide insight for working with the news media. Specific writing styles for print, online and broadcast media will be considered, as well as formal and informal writing for internal communications.

The final product for this class will be a portfolio of writing samples appropriate to the student's later job search. Students will be expected to take on their assignments with a professional attitude and a willingness to learn new techniques. Good writing takes practice, dedication, hard work and passion.

### **COURSE LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

At the conclusion of the course, you will:

- Apply rules of punctuation and grammar; produce consistent style; illustrate quality content, organization, format, and design of standard strategic communication messages and documents; demonstrate the nine-step writing process;
- Strengthen critical and creative thinking abilities; successfully utilize strategy, target audience focus, and diplomacy in writing, including creation of oral presentations;
- Employ the tools used to effectively assist organizations achieve their values-driven, mission-related business goals; evaluate potential jobs in strategic writing;
- Begin to build a professional portfolio by creating high-quality documents for print, broadcast, and online/social media in a variety of strategic disciplines: public relations, advertising, sales and marketing, and business communication.

### **PREREQUISITE**

- COMM 301/342: Introduction to Strategic Communication – you need to have taken this class before taking StratComm Writing.

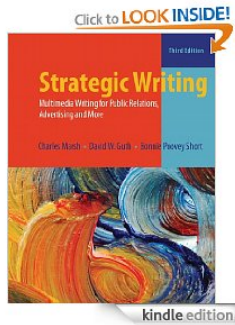
### **WR CREDIT**

This course qualifies as one of the two required WR course in the Communication curriculum. It also fulfills the requirement for a professional writing experience for Communication majors.

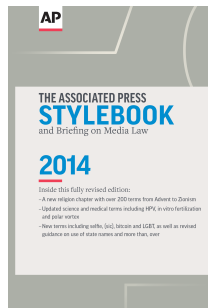
### **ADDITIONAL RESOURCES (RECOMMENDED)**

- USB Drive [Also recommend downloading/signing up for Dropbox, Google Drive, and/or Evernote]
- Subscribe to the newsletters for AdAge and PR Daily.
- Invest in Hemmingway App [desktop or mobile]
- Newspapers, magazines, trade publications, websites and other publications as required by assignments or your own interests. In particular, you should be a registered user of latimes.com, which is free. See the press releases services described at <http://www.latimes.com/pressreleases>. You should be familiar with <http://www.prnewswire.com>, <http://www.businesswire.com> and other press release services.

## BOOKS



- **Marsh, C., Guth, D.W., & Short, C.P. (2012). *Strategic Writing: Multimedia Writing for Public Relations, Advertising and More* (3rd Edition). Allyn and Bacon.**



- **Associated Press. (2014). *The Associated Press Stylebook***
- **AP Style is also available as an app [<http://ow.ly/CVHuF>]**

### ADDITIONAL RESOURCES (NOT REQUIRED – BUT RECOMMENDED)

- Kessler, L. (2003). *When words collide: A media writer's guide to grammar and style*. 6th Edition. Wadsworth Publishing.
- O'Conner, P. (2004). *Woe is I: The grammarphobe's guide to better English in plain English*. 2nd Edition. East Rutherford, NJ: Riverhead Trade.

### ATTENDANCE

- Attendance is **mandatory** and roll will be taken each day.
- Class presentations will give particular advantages on projects to those who attend class regularly.
- If you miss **more than two** unexcused absences without official documentation, you will **fail** the course.

### ASSIGNMENTS

Grades will be calculated from the following percentages

- Final project (20%) : Portfolio + Resume + Cover Letter
- Attendance and Participation: (10%)
- Out of class Writing assignments:
  1. (2) Press Release - 10%
  2. (1) Feature Story – 10%
  3. Cision University Certification Program – 15%
  4. Infographic Assignment - 5%
  5. Blog Post Content – 5 %
  6. (1) Strategic Communications Interview – 10%
  7. Social Media Message Strategies – 10%
  8. Broadcast Storyboard Advertising Commercial – 5%

**TOTAL PERCENTAGE: 100%**

### LATE ASSIGNMENTS

All assignments have to be turned in through Safe Assign **before class** – or else your assignment *loses 10 points automatically*. You will also need to bring in a hard copy of the assignment to class. Failure to do this will also be **an automatic deduction of 10 points**.

Late assignments will be accepted with a 10% penalty. Projects are due at the very beginning of class. After 24 hours, **no assignments will be accepted.**

### **SPECIAL NEEDS**

Students with special learning needs are encouraged to discuss accommodations with the professor early in the semester. Students may be asked to contact the Disability Resource Center to determine academic accommodations (852-6938).

### **ETHICS:**

Practitioners and academicians in Strategic Communication agree that ethics is an important, best practice element of public relations. Ethical areas discussed throughout the course intersect with the following issues: philosophical principles, international issues, concealment versus disclosure, divided loyalties, social responsibility, accountability, professionalism, code of ethics, whistle blowing, confidentiality, ethically dealing with the media, solicitation of new business, research, logical arguments, and multicultural and gender diversity.

### **COURSE POLICIES**

- **ATTENDANCE IS MANDATORY.** If you miss more than two classes without proper documentation (ex. sickness, school function activities), **you will automatically fail the class.**
- Students are required to ensure their proper registration for the course.
- For excused absences, students need to submit hard copies of proper documentation (ex. doctor's note, university sponsored activities supervisor, etc). Showing the documentation briefly to the professor does not count.
- Students are expected to attend all classes, arrive on time and participate in class discussion. Out of consideration for others, do not be late or leave the room once class has started. If you need to leave early, let your instructor know before class begins that you will be leaving before class is dismissed.
- Based on previous experience, students who neglected their homework and/or missed class performed poorly in the course.
- Assigned readings should be completed prior to class, and students should be prepared to discuss the assigned material. Any material discussed in class and/or covered in the assigned readings may be included in examinations. The listed readings represent a minimum requirement, and the instructor reserves the right to add readings.
- No extra credit will be given for additional work.
- Lectures may not be tape-recorded.
- Syllabus is subject to change, as professor deems appropriate and necessary.
- Please turn off all handheld devices, including mobile phones, pagers, PDAs, etc.
- **All written assignments for this course must be typed in 12-point font, double spaced on one side of white paper, and have one-inch margins. Points will be deducted for spelling, punctuation and grammatical errors, as well as failing to follow assignment directions and requirements.**
- Assignments are to be turned in through SafeAssign on Blackboard as well as a hard copy. Hard copies of the assignment need to be stapled and presented in a professional manner. Black ink is only acceptable to use for this class.

### **CLASS ETIQUETTE**

- **Addressing Professor in the classroom and by email.** I prefer to be addressed as —Dr. Freberg or Professor Freberg. Mrs. Freberg is my Mom. 😊
- **Treat class like you would on the job.** When in doubt, treat your classroom performance as a paid job. If you do in class what you would do at work (without getting fired), you are likely to be doing the right thing.
- **Personal Responsibility for Class material.** We are all busy people. Please do not email me about stuff that is your responsibility to know, such as “When is the assignment due?” or “What chapters should I read for the this class?” or “How much is this assignment worth towards my final grade?” The answers to all of these questions are on the syllabus.
- **Leaving class early.** If you must leave early for an appointment or registering for classes, etc., please sit as close to the door as possible and leave as unobtrusively as possible. This should be a once in a great while type of behavior, not a regular behavior.

- Class Professionalism and Etiquette: I hope it goes without saying that if you plan to sleep, read the Louisville Cardinal, text your friends, go on Facebook or engage in other extraneous activities, it would be best to not come to class.
  - Be aware of AP Stylebook Guidelines for in-class assignments and projects: Strategic communicators have to be skilled in writing and first impressions matter. Spelling mistakes and fact errors (ex. Misspelling of a name, location, etc) will result in significant grade deductions (-50 pts). Review your papers before submitting them – spell check on Word does not always catch mistakes.
  - Computers will remain off in the computer lab unless specified. There will be several times in class where there will be in-class writing assignments. This will be the only time the computers will be used in COMM 344.
  - Class will end on time. I will NEVER hold you later than that. In exchange, please do not “pack up” as the end of class approaches. The resulting noise can be very distracting to all of us.
  - Email Etiquette: Please be professional when writing emails to the instructor – and make sure that correct spelling and grammar is used. I will respond to emails as soon as possible. I welcome email inquiries and comments from students. However, please consider that you may have 4 or 5 instructors per semester, but I typically have 100 students. I will not answer emails that do not include the information below:
    - Your full name—I do not like to guess from your email or look you up on my class roster in order to respond appropriately.
    - Which class you are in—I teach three different courses this semester and have over 100+ students.
    - Signature – make sure to conclude your email with your name – not sent via iPhone or Android.
  - Cell phones: As a courtesy to your instructor and to your classmates, please make sure at the beginning of each class period that your cell phones and pagers are turned off.
  - In-class computer use: You may use a computer to take notes in class. However, in-class computer usage is **restricted** to taking notes about this particular class. Writing papers for other classes, surfing the Internet, checking email, visiting Facebook, or other such distractions are prohibited. I will take off participation points if I see this happening in class.
  - Excused absences. If you are involved in athletics or another school-sanctioned activity that requires you to miss this class, please give me appropriate supporting material signed by the sponsor. Please underline or highlight the specific dates that involve this class. If changes occur throughout the semester after you have given me a schedule, please keep me updated.
  - In-class writing assignments. We will have access to computers to complete in-class writing assignments. It is important to be able to write on a deadline. Be on time for these in-class writing assignments since you will only have the time allotted for class (until 3:15 pm).
- Safe Assign: All in class assignments will be submitted through SafeAssign. You will not be able to get extra time for your assignments. Remember, you will also be turning in hard copies of your papers as well.
- Check your University Email daily: Check it daily! Make it a habit. You can work with the HelpDesk to have your University email forwarded to an account you already check daily. Checking is a requirement.
  - Be on time for class: Class starts exactly at 2 PM- students are encouraged to be on time and lateness to class will be noted. The door to the classroom will close and will not be reopened. In the workplace, if you are late to your job, you may lose it.

## **OTHER POLICIES**

- **Academic Integrity:** Instructors may use a range of strategies (including plagiarism-prevention software at the university) to compare student works with private and public information resources in order to identify possible plagiarism and academic dishonesty. Comparisons of student works may require submitting a copy of the original work to the plagiarism-prevention service. The service may retain that copy in some circumstances.

For more information about the SafeAssign plagiarism-prevention tool, visit:  
<http://delphi.louisville.edu/help/safeassign/> (*opens in a new window*).

- **Plagiarism** (or any other incident of academic dishonesty) is an affront to the educational system and will not be tolerated. Students discovered in this situation will have a letter placed in their academic file documenting the incident. Students will receive a zero on any assignment that is plagiarized and a warning, which means:
  - Copying someone else's work and claiming it as your own, including but not limited to, work accessed in person, from computer files, or from the internet.
  - Paraphrasing someone else's work and claiming it as your own.
  - Collaborating excessively with another person and claiming it as your own.
  - If students are caught plagiarizing their work, they will get a zero on the assignment and a warning. Second time caught plagiarizing their work will be reported to the department and judiciary committee.

### GRADING SCALE

A+	97-100
A	94-96
A-	90-93
B+	87-89
B	88-84
B -	80-83
C+	77-79
C	74-76
C-	70-73
D	60-69
F/WF	59 and below

### GRADING BASED ON WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

**A = Outstanding.** This grade is for work of clearly professional quality (publishable or broadcast ready). The writing is clear and well-organized; it requires virtually no editing. The reporting is complete and leaves no significant questions unanswered. The work is turned in by or before deadline, needing no changes before submission to clients or editors. These strategic messages get results, win awards and, when appropriate, feature creative concepts; they are executed with comprehensive research, interesting presentation and nearly flawless writing.

**B = Good.** This grade is for work that could be raised to professional standards without extensive editing. Writing is grammatically correct but may lack the sparkle and fine organization of "A" work. The reporting answers the main questions but may miss the proper emphasis or the best sources. The work is turned in by deadline with little or no prompting and needs only minor revisions in such areas as reorganizing, rewriting, reformatting or providing more or better sources. "B" work doesn't necessarily have any errors, but it could be better, often with a stronger topic or subject, a more artistic presentation, better information or improved writing. "B" work demonstrates basic broadcast or print style.

**C = Adequate.** This grade is for work that indicates a problem in at least one area, such as grammar, diplomacy or strategy. It does not measure up to professional quality but could be saved by revision. Work is incomplete by deadline and/or needs more than minor revision before submission to a client or supervisor. These messages have weak ideas, concepts or presentation. They draw attention because they don't quite do the job. In summary, the work is an adequate first draft but isn't yet ready to show a client or supervisor.

**D = Unacceptable.** This grade is for work that is clearly unacceptable even in a classroom setting. The writing is confused and/or ungrammatical. The reporting is flawed and may contain major factual errors and/or omissions or may show little concept of basic strategic judgment. Work may miss the deadline.

**F = Failing.** This grade is for work that is not completed in a professional, timely way. For whatever reason, it suggests that the student did not take the assignment seriously. Such performance is often the result of personal or time-management problems that extend beyond a lack of skills or understanding of the research, writing or production processes.

## GRADING ASSUMPTIONS

- The grading process starts with the assumption that the work is "good," which earns a grade of "B." (See "good" definition above.). You may write a story with no errors that earns a "B."
- Strong and (when appropriate) clever leads, exceptional storytelling, effective and appropriate use of traditional literary devices such as alliteration, metaphors and parallel constructions help boost stories to the "A" category. Also, exceptional reporting, diplomacy and adherence to strategy can boost stories to the "A" category.
- Fact errors, poor organization, grammar/spelling/usage errors, weak verbs, weak leads, unsound strategic judgment, bad diplomacy, missed deadlines and/or failure to follow proper style and format will lower an assignment's grade.

One of the most important aspects of strategic writing is the ability to meet deadlines. I take deadlines very seriously, and I expect you to do the same. All work will be due at the beginning of class unless otherwise announced.

***This is a communications class, and accuracy counts.*** If your writing is filled with mistakes, readers will question your credibility as a strategic writer. It is your responsibility to make sure that what you turn in reflects careful research, fact-checking, and proper spelling. In other words, I strongly encourage you to proofread your work carefully.

**Fact errors** should be taken very seriously in this class. These are misspellings of names, places, and additional information that is not correct. As a result, if you make one of these mistakes on your paper, this results in an **automatic F and -50 points** on your assignment grade. In the real world, these can get you fired immediately.

## PARTICIPATION

Participating in class discussion, keeping up with the latest trends and news in the industry and profession, and sharing insights with peers are part of what constitutes the overall participation grade for this course. The professor reserves the right to adjust this grade based on the individual student's participation, enthusiasm, and attitude in class.

Make sure to arrive on time for class and I will take points off each time students who are interrupting the class or walking out early and in the middle of a session.

In order to get the full number of points for participation, students are encouraged to reading all of the materials before class, bring in examples of current campaigns, trends, or news articles you would like to share with the class related to the class topic for the week, and bringing in potential discussion questions to ask during the class time.

## WRITING EXERCISES AND ASSIGNMENTS

- Many classes will include an in-class writing exercise. Some exercises take place in class and are in addition to the home assignments listed in the syllabus. You may be asked to revise or edit other students' work.
- Some writing will be on deadline. Writing on deadline is an essential skill for public relations as well as other fields. Students need to be able to do assignments in a certain amount of time. In-class writing assignments will need to still be presented in a professional manner – writing needs to be clearly stated and readable. If I can't read your handwriting, I will not grade it.
- Out of class writing assignments must be double-spaced. Leave blank space and margins to allow space for editing comments. All assignments will be submitted on Safe Assign on Blackboard by the beginning of class time.

**TENTATIVE SCHEDULE (SUBJECT TO CHANGE) FOR SPRING 2015**

<b>DATE / WEEK</b>	<b>TOPIC</b>	<b>CHAPTERS &amp; ASSIGNMENTS</b>
WEEK 1 1/7 & 1/9	Introduction Outcomes of Persuasive Writing	<p><u>Reading:</u> Section I - "Strategic Writing," pp. 1 – 39, Read Appendices A-D</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>For 1/11 class, prepare a two-page bibliography of yourself to share with the class. Use third person. Discuss interest in focus area within StratComm.</li> <li>Overview of Cision University Program.</li> </ul> <p><b>** All Assignments need to be posted via SafeAssign and turn in hard copy.</b></p> <p><u>For 1/14</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Topic: Introduction to StratComm Writing / Plagiarism</li> <li>Look at one news feature / article in a newspaper (local, national, global) focused on an area within Strategic Communications.</li> <li>Bring copy of article / URL to class. Discuss reasoning for choosing this article and how it is relevant to StratComm</li> </ul>
WEEK 2 1/12 & 1/14	Strategic Comm Planning	<p><u>Reading:</u> "Strategic Writing in Public Relations," pp. 41-42 "News Release Guidelines," pp. 43-75; Strategic Media Planner (pp.121-132).</p> <p><u>For 1/12</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Introduction to Strategic Writing</li> <li>Plagiarism &amp; Writing in Strategic Communications</li> </ul> <p><u>For 1/21</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Write a brief (about one page) comparison of two press releases – one you think is good and the other you think needs improvement. Bring URL of press release if available, to class so you can discuss. [SHARE IN CLASS]</li> </ul>
WEEK 3 1/21	Persuasion in Print Writing	<p><u>Reading:</u> "Media Kit Guidelines," pp. 76-86, Start Section II – Strategic Writing in PR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bring to class two examples of a press release – one good and one bad. Be prepared to write a reaction to both press releases and discuss how to improve them.</li> <li>Reach out to find an example of a media kit to present to class on 2/11</li> </ul> <p><b>PRESS RELEASE ASSIGNMENT (OUT OF CLASS): DUE 1/21</b></p>
WEEK 4 1/26 & 1/28	Practice in Print Writing: Public Relations Press Releases, Media Kits, Brief, Pitches	<p><u>Reading:</u> Section II – Strategic Writing in PR, News Release Guidelines and Features (pp. 43-57)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bring to class two examples of a press release – one good and one bad. Be prepared to write a reaction to both press releases and discuss how to improve them.</li> </ul> <p><b>IN CLASS ASSIGNMENT: PRESS RELEASE (1/28)</b></p>
WEEK 5 2/2 & 2/4	Practice in Print Writing: Feature Writing	<p><u>Reading:</u> News Release Guidelines and Features (pp. 43-57); Media Kits (pp. 76-77), "Print Advertisements," pp. 133-138</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>On 2.11 – Bring an example of a media kit to class. DO NOT bring the UoL media kit.</li> <li>Each of you will discuss how to find media kits, show the class the media kits and discuss strengths and weaknesses.</li> </ul> <p><b>FEATURE STORY ASSIGNMENT (OUT OF CLASS): DUE 2/11</b></p>
WEEK 6	Practice in Print Writing:	<u>Reading:</u> "Print Advertisements," pp. 133-138

2/9 & 2/11	Print Advertising	<p>For 2/9</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Class time to prepare for in-class print ad assignment and work on Cision University program.</li> <li>Review best practices and guidelines for Print Ads. You will be given a brief overview of the print ad you will need to create during class [mostly ad copy] on 2/11.</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>2/11 : IN CLASS ACTIVITY: PRINT AD</b></p>
WEEK 7 2/16 & 2/18	Practice in Print Writing: Direct Mail & Infographics	<p>Reading: Section III – Strategic Writing in Advertising + TBD (Infographics)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Importance of visual communication in writing</li> <li>Direct Mail Components and Best Practices</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>IN CLASS ASSIGNMENT (TO CONTINUE WORKING ON &amp; SUBMIT ON 3/6): INFOGRAPHIC ASSIGNMENT</b></p>
WEEK 8 2/23 & 2/25	Persuasion & Practice in Digital Media	<p>Reading: To be posted on Blackboard + Social Media Releases (pp. 58-61) + Websites (pp. 105-108) &amp; Blogs (pp.109-111)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bring an example of a professional blog from an Advertising, PR, or IMC professional.</li> <li>Be prepared to discuss features, pros, and improvements to the blog.</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>IN CLASS ASSIGNMENT (2/25): WRITING FOR SOCIAL MEDIA [BLOG CONTENT]</b></p>
WEEK 9 3/2 & 3/4	Persuasion & Practice in Digital Media	<p>Reading: Microblogging and Status Updates (pp. 115-118) + Mobile Messaging (pp.174-176)</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>3/2 &amp; 3/4: NO CLASS – SPEND CLASS TIME WORKING ON YOUR STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION INTERVIEW #1 ASSIGNMENT</b></p>
WEEK 10 3/9 & 3/11	Persuasion & Practice in Digital Media	<p>Reading: Microblogging and Status Updates (pp. 115-118) + Mobile Messaging (pp.174-176)</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>3/9: SPEND CLASS TIME WORKING ON YOUR CISION UNIVERSITY PROGRAM CERTIFICATION</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>SOCIAL MEDIA MESSAGE STRATEGIES ASSIGNMENT: DUE 3/11</b></p>
<b>3/16 &amp; 3/18</b>	<b>NO CLASS – SPRING BREAK</b>	
WEEK 10 3/23 & 3/25	Practice in Live Media: Scripting	<p>Reading: Microblogging and Status Updates (pp. 115-118) + Mobile Messaging (pp.174-176)</p> <p>Reading: Reading: Broadcast/Podcast Writing, 11-15, Pitching pp. 65-69; VNR (pp.70-75)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Introduction to Video News Releases</li> <li><b>In-class Assignment: VNR script</b></li> </ul>
WEEK 11 3/30 & 4/1	Practice in Broadcast Media (PR)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review presentation instructions and assignments</li> <li>Spend class time revising previous assignments and be able to provide an update for class meeting</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION INTERVIEW ASSIGNMENT: DUE 4/1</b></p>
WEEK 12 4/6 & 4/8	Practice in Broadcast Media (Ad)	<p>Reading: “Television Advertisements,” pp. 144-150</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>IN-CLASS ASSIGNMENT: BROADCAST STORYBOARD (DUE 4/13)</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>CISION UNIVERSITY ASSIGNMENT / CERTIFICATION DUE 4/8</b></p>



WEEK 13 4/13 & 4/15	Practice in Administrative Writing	<p><u>Reading:</u> "Business Letters," pp. 201-204; "Bad-News Letters," pp. 208-212; Fact Sheets (pp.81-83) + Job Request Letters (pp.216-220)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Resumes and Cover Letters</li> <li>• Preparation for Portfolio Materials</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>IN CLASS ASSIGNMENT FOR 4/15:</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>COVER LETTER + RESUME</b></p>
WEEK 14 4/20	Course Evaluations & Preparing for Presentations	<p><b>FINAL PORTFOLIOS DUE BY 3:15 PM</b>  <b>MUST BE TURNED INTO DR. FREBERG'S MAILBOX</b>  <b>310 STRICKLER HALL</b></p>