Hello, welcome to Academic Writing II. My name is Professor Elisabeth Aiken, and I am the developer of the course; however, I may not be your instructor. This course emphasizes argumentative writing based on the analytical study of literature. Before we begin, think about this for a second. What are some ways that we become really good at what we do? Do we try it one time and say, “That’s the best that I can do, so that’s the way I’m going to do it?” Or do we try it different ways until we get it right. Well, much is the same in the area of writing. Reading and writing about literature enhances the critical thinking and analytical skills needed in all areas of life.

While the focus of this course is on writing, the literature component will help you respond to critical issues on a daily basis. You will be reading and analyzing short stories, poems, and drama, and then writing critical essays about some of the selections you read. In addition to the critical essays, you will have a chance to respond to specific questions related to various works that you will be reading throughout the course. Some of these questions will be posted for fellow students to read and respond to as well, so be sure to critically think about your responses and look for those important elements that are vital to successful and effective writing.

This course also includes a research paper. In the age of information technology that we are in today, research is becoming our way of life. We research before we shop, trying to find the best places to shop and the best product for our needs. Even when we use Ebay, we are doing some of the stages of the research process. The process of writing a research paper includes developing an idea about a topic, gathering information from other sources, and integrating these sources with your own ideas to provide support for your research thesis.

The research component will provide you with skills needed to gain knowledge and information whenever needed. When learning something new you must learn in stages in order to be effective. The same is true in research. I think about a motorcycle riding course I took a few years ago. Before we ever saw the motorcycles, we had to meet in a class and get some basic information about what was involved in learning how to ride and some of the “rules for the road” sort of things. It was the next day that we went out on the riding range and were introduced to the motorcycles, sat on them, and walked them around for a few minutes before we started the motor. We had to make sure we could balance properly with the weight of the cycle. Even after we were on the bike with the motor running, we didn’t just take off riding, but we were given simple drills to practice. Each practice drill became a little more difficult but we practiced until we were comfortable with it, and before the afternoon was over, we looked like the Shriners in a parade doing figure eights in formation.

The English Department uses the MLA style of documentation, but your text also includes other styles that may be useful in different disciplines. This documentation, when used correctly, will help you to avoid the many mistakes that occur when writing.

The research process, your readings, and your writings will provide you with critical thinking and analytical skills needed in many areas of life. We have some good texts from which we can choose a good selection of literature. I am excited about our activities throughout the course, and I am convinced that strong writing and reading skills make a difference in our careers and in the quality of our lives, and that every sincere effort to improve those skills will ultimately pay off.

Again, Welcome to Academic Writing II. Let’s get started.