Welcome English 101 students. I invite you to enjoy a new learning experience as we journey through this online course. Our focus will be on language – how to use it, read, it, analyze it, write it, and hopefully, come to a greater understanding of its power and influence in all that we do.

If you have taken an online class before, then you know how it works. You understand that the entire class is conducted without actually meeting face-to-face, that we have ‘discussions’ online, that assignments are submitted online (NOT via email), that the technology is durable, exciting, and flexible.

But for those of you who have never taken an online class before, the idea that we never sit in a classroom together, that you never see me ‘lecture’ at the front of the room, that no essays or assignments are actually ‘handed’ over to me, may all seem like a foreign concept. I suppose it’s like explaining an iPhone to someone from the 19th century: “Yeah, it’s this little 3 inch plastic rectangle that holds hundreds of songs, emails, and contact information, and you can access the Internet, find driving directions, weather reports, and the latest news, all by simply tapping your finger and sliding it across the screen. Oh yeah, and it can take photographs and record short videos.” I imagine the 19th century person would be quite perplexed. (And he or she would wonder what a “video” is!)

Have no fear! If you can navigate through this ‘Welcome Letter,’ visit the Virtual Valley site on the LAVC homepage, find your username and password, take a quiz on the VV site to determine if you’re ready for an online class (and you succeed), then you are good to go!

Please note that this English course requires a lot of reading and a lot of writing. You will need to make a substantial time commitment in order to be successful in this class. For whom does the Etudes bell toll? In other words, is an online class right for you? Some students find they prefer online classes; others prefer a traditional face-to-face class. You will have to decide for yourself. And one way to do that is to explore LAVC’s Virtual Valley site. Read on…

Virtual Valley Website

Please take a visit to the Virtual Valley site by clicking the link below:

http://www.lavc.edu/virtualvalley/index.html
Remember, whether you’re an online class pro or a relative beginner, please read this entire letter to understand some specifics of the class. Also, make sure you purchase the required textbook before the class begins on Monday, Feb. 4th, 2013. In order to achieve a high level of success in the class, you must own a copy of the textbook, as this tool is an integral part of the course.

**How to Begin**

To start, you will want to know the structure of the class:

The class is entirely on-line – there are no required on-campus meetings.

The class will begin Feb. 4th, 2013 through the ETUDES-NG website. The website and information on how to determine your username and password can be found at:

http://www.lavc.edu/virtualvalley/index.html#

The most direct way to logon to the Etudes class is the following: myetudes.org

This class will travel at the same pace as the in-person classroom sections. To keep up with the class and important announcements and discussions, you will need to log on regularly, if only for a short time to check in.

**Important Note**: You must complete the first week’s two assignments in order to remain enrolled in the class. If you fail to complete the two assignments by the end of the first week of classes, you may be dropped from the class. The assignments will be available for you to see on the first day of the semester.

An online class can be both challenging and exciting. You need to have and make the time to complete all the assignments, participate in discussions, and be open-minded to learning. You also need to be self-motivated and self-disciplined to succeed. If you want to determine if an online class is really for you, take the quizzes at:

http://www.lavc.edu/virtualvalley/tutorials.html

**What You Need For An Online Class:**

Understand that this class is an English reading and writing course to begin with which means there is a vast amount of reading and writing. Also understand that due to the nature of the online environment, there will be a lot more reading and writing because anything we might ‘say’ in a traditional classroom, now requires that it be communicated in written form. The beauty of the increased reading and writing element of the class is that you get the opportunity to constantly work on your writing and critical reading skills!

Make sure that you have easy and reliable internet access. And think about your ‘backup plan’ in the event your computer breaks down or has some malfunction.
Check to make sure that your computer system is adequate, that you have all the needed software and that your settings are correct. Even if you have taken an Etudes class before, please check your settings and make certain you are using only the recommended browsers and browser version.

To learn how to set up your computer browser and learn more about the system requirements, please click on the link below:

http://www.lavc.edu/virtualvalley/etudes_basics/Lesson1_Getting_Started_main.html

Have a back-up computer (know the computer lab locations on campus) in case of problems. Technical difficulties will not be an acceptable excuse for late or missed work. Have a back-up plan in case your computer decides to crash on you. Most public libraries have free computer access. The LAVC campus has several computer labs. And if all else fails, there are 24 hour computer/Internet rental services at places like FedEx Office.

Have a working email address that you check regularly. Announcements containing important information are both posted on our Etudes class homepage and sent to you via email. You are also responsible to respond to all Private Messages sent to you by the instructor.

Help!

If you have any technical issues, visit the Virtual Valley “Help Desk” page at:

http://www.lavc.edu/virtualvalley/help.html

Frequently Asked Questions

To visit the FAQ page on the Virtual Valley site, please click on the link below. Here you will find information and resources about what you need to know for online classes. The FAQ's page includes answers to such questions as:

How do I know an online class is right for me?

What technology skills will I need to take an online course?

Do I have to be online at a certain time to take my class?

http://www.lavc.edu/virtualvalley/frequentlyAskedQuestions.html

Syllabus

The syllabus for the course will be available the first day of class on Feb. 4th. Meanwhile, for those who want to get a jumpstart on the class, keep reading below! You can purchase your textbook early and begin reading.
Textbook

Required Textbooks: You are required to purchase the two books before the class begins. They are available at the LAVC Bookstore, online through the LAVC Bookstore, or online through a vendor of your choice (for example, Half.com or Amazon.com).


In order to achieve a high level of success in the class, you must own a copy of the textbooks, as these tools are integral parts of the course.

To find additional information (i.e. ISBN) please visit the LAVC Bookstore site below. Select: Valley College, Spring 2013 term, English Dept., Course 101, and section: Mintz.

http://www.lavcbookstore.com/

And finally, roll up your sleeves, watch your posture, set your hands to the keyboard and have a great time in the class. Here’s how you begin once the class opens on February 6th:

1. Read the Syllabus
2. Review all Announcements
3. Review the Class Schedule for important due dates
4. Familiarize yourself with the Modules (which contain the online lectures and important information)
5. Review any open Assignments
6. Create your Profile (directions are given to you in the first week’s module)
7. Read and participate in Discussion #1
8. Complete the Treasure Hunt Assignment

My hope is that you learn from this course, enjoy the experience, and have fun in the process. See you online!

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