First, turn editing on.

From the "add an activity" drop down menu select Forum.

Enter the name of the forum that you want students to see on the main course page.

Select the type of forum you want to use. For most purposes the standard forum for general use will work just fine.

To read a brief description of the various forum types click the circled question mark.

The text you put in the forum introduction, will appear at the top of the list of messages in the forum. People will also be able to read the text you put in the forum introduction when they are posting a new discussion topic. This makes the forum introduction a good place to put the specific instructions to students about how to use the discussion forum.

I recommend that when you give students instructions, you clearly indicate whether they should start a new discussion topic or reply to an existing topic. If you want them to create a new discussion topic, I recommend that you include instructions of what they should put in the subject line of the post.
One of the advantages of using the discussion forum is the ability to grade students’ postings. If you do not want to grade the messages, leave “aggregate type” set to “no ratings.” If you do want to grade students’ posts, select the way to have ratings for individual messages to be combined into the grade for that discussion forum. You can see the list of “Aggregate types” by clicking the question mark in the circle.

Set the number of points you want students to be able to earn in this discussion forum.

Online discussions are much easier to participate in if everyone in the class is reading and posting messages within the same span of days. Therefore Scholar allows you to set a range of dates during which posts need to be made in order to be graded. Students who do not post messages within that timeframe, cannot earn the points. If you want to make use of this feature, just check the box and set the dates.

Scroll to the bottom and click "save and return to course."