Where should I start?

Can’t think of what to say? When writing an essay, you don’t have to write it from start to finish, introduction to conclusion. Try this instead:

1. Read and re-read the instructions and/or prompt from your instructor. Underline or highlight what the assignment is asking you to do.

2. Consult your texts. If the paper is based on literature you’ve read in class, go through the literature again with the paper prompt in mind. If you need outside research, do some preliminary research by looking up articles online or browsing books in the library. Mark sections that seem relevant or spark ideas for you.

   - What are some possible topics for your paper?
   - What evidence might you be able to use to discuss these topics?
   - What conclusions might you make about these topics (i.e. what might your thesis be)?

   - Which of these possible conclusions interest you most?
   - Can you address it in the length and type of paper your professor wants?
   - Is there enough evidence to back up your thesis?

5. This is a good point at which to talk to your professor, if you can. Run your tentative thesis by him or her and see if he or she approves and/or has any ideas to make it better.

6. Begin to write! I’d advise beginning with a brief outline:
   - What is your thesis?
   - What are some main points you want to make that back up your thesis?
   - What material might you use as evidence for each of those points?

7. If you run into trouble, visit the Writing Center!