We will engage in a semester-long web project throughout ENG1102. This project will comprise 300 points for the class, and it will be the forum where you will present the majority of your writing for this course. The point here is this is an extremely important facet of this course.

By Monday, January 14th, the class will break into five groups of five. The group that you become a part of will be your group throughout the semester, and much of your success in the class will depend on your interaction with them and, to some extent, on forces beyond your control. If you do not like the sound of that, you should consider dropping this class. If you decide to stick with it, I would encourage you to choose your group wisely. It is important to choose a topic / focus / identity that everyone in the group feels comfortable with, and that will allow you all to remain enthusiastic and focused throughout the semester.

Early in the course, you will be creating a thorough outline for your website, which you will eventually create and publish after Spring Break. This outline will serve as a contract, where you will describe the writing that each of you will do for Writing Assignment 1, Writing Assignment 2 (your feature), and any “bonus content” or additional writing that you will do for your website. For the outline/contract, though, I’m primarily interested in your description of your various larger assignments and how all ten will function within the context of your website. In addition, feel free to make your “Sampler” assignments tie into your website as well. There’s no point in doing writing that won’t count toward your overall grade.

I can’t stress enough how much preparation and thought should go into both your overall concept, and into making your writing assignments function as part of your website. If you do this correctly, and stick to your outline, it should significantly lessen your work after Spring Break, where you will be focusing largely on pulling everything together for your website.

I will provide feedback on your outlines, though there are no points associated with them. They will be the first impression that your group makes on me, and I will keep them throughout the semester. However, you will have the opportunity to revise your outlines, as needed.

I’m giving you very few guidelines for your website. The primary goal of your website is to create a specific identity. You must have a specific goal – to showcase a style of music, to reflect or promote the work of a band or bands, to discuss a trend, to highlight an issue – there are many ways to interpret this goal, and that’s deliberate. I want you to have a lot of freedom here, though I’m going to provide feedback on your outline which will hopefully help to keep you moving in the right direction. We will view and discuss a number of websites throughout the course (there’s a brief list on the syllabus -(broader webzines, such as rollingstone.com, pastemagazine.com, cokemachineglow.com, and pitchforkmedia.com, fansites for an individual artist, such as www.ateaseweb.com, www.greenplastic.com, or even something like www.bighairmetal.com), but ultimately the design and the focus of your website is up to your group.

Your websites will be due during the last two weeks of class. On the day that your website is due, you will host a “launch party,” where your group will be in charge of the class. During this class, you can do whatever you want. More on this later in the semester.

Finally, on the last day of class, you will turn in a “Behind the Music” form. This will be the final part of your participation in your group – it is mandatory, so it’s important not to miss this day.
Sampler Assignments

Sampler Track 1: My Music Identity (1/11)
Write a 1 ½ - 2 page essay in which you discuss your “music identity.” I would like you to write about your overall feelings about and interaction with music, as well as attempting to classify your primary musical taste. What kind of music do you most prefer? What kind of music do you hate? Why? How does music affect your everyday life? Rather than attempting to answer these questions in order, it is important to craft a coherent essay about your interaction with music with a specific thesis about your relationship with music.

Sampler Track 2: Review (2/22)
For this assignment, you will write a 1 ½ - 2 page review of something, anything, of your choosing. We will be reading reviews in class, and you should use those as a model for this response. I would strongly encourage you all to think about how this piece of writing might be used on your website. (If you choose to do a review for writing assignment 1, you cannot review the same thing for this assignment.)

Sampler Track 3: Interview (2/8)
This sampler assignment will ask you to write up a 1 ½ - 2 page essay about the interview that you conducted in class on Monday, 2/4. You may write this interview in whatever way you choose, but it is important.

Sampler Track 4 Feature (2/22)
For this assignment, you will write a 1 ½ - 2 page essay responding to a feature article that will be assigned in class. It is important that your response essay have a thesis about the article, that you make an argument about what the author is doing and about the effect it has on the reader.

Sampler Track 5: A Good List (3/26)
Your last sampler assignment will ask you to make a list. Listmaking is very popular in the world of music writing, with things like mix-tapes and best-of lists being a great way to introduce people to new music. You will need to create a list and write a 1 ½ - 2 page justification of (or description of) your list. I would strongly encourage you all to think about how this piece of writing might be used on your website.
Writing Assignment 2: Feature (4/4)

This will be your primary written assignment for this course. It will comprise 20% of your overall grade (in addition to its inclusion on your website, where it will be graded as a part of that site), and it is your primary written work for this course. It must include a research component of some kind; in other words, while it doesn’t have to be a research paper (indeed, it should not be a straight research paper), it must somehow involve research of some kind, and it must include an MLA works cited page. Furthermore, it must include a thesis – it must attempt to prove a point, not merely provide information about a topic.

I expect each of your features to be somehow related to the topic of your website, but feel free to be a bit fuzzy on this. They don’t all have to approach the same aspect, or take the same approach. Some variety in terms of these things would definitely be good.

But this is really the place of be selfish; it is your job as an individual to make this the best piece of writing that you have ever created in your life. I’m looking for a word count of 2500-3000, which is about 6-9 pages in MS Word. Please don’t worry if it turns out a little longer, or even a little shorter – just so long as it doesn’t feel too long, or too short. Also, feel free to be creative in terms of topic and approach. Rock n’ roll writing works best when it is interesting and when it engages readers. If you have specific questions about ideas that you are unsure about, I strongly encourage you to email them to me or ask me about them after class.

We will read a variety of examples throughout the class, but it is important to develop your own style as a music writer. You should not attempt to model your writing too closely on any of the writers that we read in this class, though you can certainly adapt qualities and techniques for your own work.
For Writing Assignment 1, you will be choosing from a variety of types of rock and roll writing. Whichever type of article you choose to write, there are a few governing principles. First, whatever you do, make sure that your writing is grammatically correct and uses effective sentence structure. Next, you need to display effective writing for the style that you choose; if you choose an interview, the writing needs to be appropriate for interviews, if you choose a review, etc. Next, although you are not being graded (yet) on this, your writing assignment should be designed to fit into the larger context of your website (this should be discussed in your outline). Next, the assignment should come in the 1500-2000 word range; if it’s a little more or a little less, that’s fine as well.

Lastly, be sure that your writing assignment shows off your ability as a writer. You should be trying to impress your readers, with the writing, with the structure, and with the content. Music writing is often designed to entertain, and you should keep that in mind throughout, but don’t feel bound by that principle alone. Music writing can also inform, persuade, and do a lot of other things beyond simply entertain, and I’m anxious to see how each of you approaches this project, hopefully in compelling ways that I haven’t even thought of. In The Smiths’ song “Ask,” Morrissey sings “If there’s something you’d like to try, ask”. Although Morrissey is definitely not talking about a writing assignment, that’s a pretty good way to think about the assignments for this class. If you have an idea that kind of fits, or that you’re not quite sure what to do with, please come to me (or your group) with it, and we can discuss how you might make it work. While I won’t promise what Morrissey does (“Ask me, I won’t say no, how could I?”), I will certainly think about how you might fit it into the class.

Interview
A great interview can provide insight like no other piece of writing. It is a chance to go directly to the primary source and, unlike quoting from a song or another article or interview, present fresh primary text that only you possess. I realize that it’s unlikely that you’ll score an interview with the majority of bands that we will be discussing in class or writing about on our websites… but don’t let that stop you from trying. And don’t let that scare you away from doing an interview of some kind. Celine Dion isn’t returning your phone calls? How about her husband (that old bald guy)? Or a roadie who works on her stage show? Or someone from her record label? You’d be surprised what a little charm, your status as a student, and the recognizability of “Georgia Tech” will do for you.

Think big with your interviews – but be sure to create a backup plan if your big idea doesn’t pan out.

Writing up your interview is, of course, as big a challenge as getting and holding your interview. A simple transcription of an interview will likely be very boring, so it’s important to decide how to frame your interview. Will you include only a written intro and conclusion, with the interview written out in Q&A style? Or will you intersperse the interviewee’s responses throughout your own writing during the entire article?

Keep in mind: there are many ethical issues and details involved with interviews. We will discuss these in class, but they include asking permission to tape an interview, editing quotes for print, etc. Keep these in mind when planning and preparing for your interviews.

Review (movie, music, song, album)
People love to read reviews. I am addicted to them, honestly, and I read reviews both of music I have heard and of music I have yet to hear. The point here is that a good review is a tough thing to write, because you have to account for both types of readers potentially. In addition to writing an insightful and analytical description of your chosen text (a few ideas – a song, an album, a movie, a
concert), you also have to make your review an entertaining piece of writing, something that a reader enjoy enough to read the entire piece. Feel free to think outside the box (what an annoying phrase – think outside the case, how bout that?) in terms of what you are reviewing, and how you approach the task.

Technology report
Here I’m imagining you discussing some sort of technological development in relation to music. If there’s something you’re interested in, this is a great opportunity to research it. For this, though, I am requiring you to have a thesis – you can’t simply compile information.

Industry issue
Often, music writing tackles issues outside of music, including things such as political and ethical issues. Rolling Stone, in particular, often steps outside the boundaries of music to tackle issues that may only be tangentially relevant to music. Other magazines also deal with issues that perhaps aren’t directly related to music, but that somehow affect the music industry. If an issue of this kind interests you, or could somehow fit into your website, you might consider this type of essay.

Other
If you have an idea for some other piece of writing that would fit this assignment and that would contribute to your website (and that would showcase your writing), I encourage you to suggest it. You should definitely ask before writing it, but I encourage creativity on this assignments.
You have three options for your final writing project for this course. For this assignment, you will be creating a mix-CD, in addition to writing a 2-3 page ‘liner notes,’ in which you explain your selections and discuss the overall organization of your mix. [Students who took my 1101 course cannot complete option 1.]

Option 1: Soundtrack of Your Life
You should create a soundtrack that somehow speaks to your life to this point. Please interpret that task in whatever way you wish. Should the songs be about your life (in terms of lyrics, etc.)? Should they be songs that are meaningful to you (but maybe have no relation to your life other than that)? Should they be songs that represent different periods of your life? The answers to these questions are up to you. Make sure your liner notes effectively describe the reasoning behind your selections, whether you go song-by-song or discuss the overall selection process. When I grade your project, I will ask myself the following questions:

- Does your CD present a coherent attempt to “soundtrack” your life?
- Is there some governing principle or idea at work in the CD?
- Does your essay effectively present this principle or idea?
- Is the essay well-written, using interesting sentence structure, compelling style, and correct grammar?

Option 2: The Ultimate Mix
You should create a disc containing what you would call “the ultimate mix.” Your goal with this mix is to create an enjoyable and interesting selection of music that achieves a specific purpose. Feel free to define this purpose for yourself – be creative, find some specific theme or idea behind your mix. Make sure your liner notes effectively describe the reasoning behind your selections, whether you go song-by-song or discuss the overall selection process. When I grade your project, I will ask myself the following questions:

- Does your mix-CD present an enjoyable and interesting collection of music?
- Is there some governing principle or idea at work in the CD?
- Does your essay effectively present this principle or idea?
- Is the essay well-written, using interesting sentence structure, compelling style, and correct grammar?

Option 3: Wedding Mix
I am getting married in June 2009, and I am planning to provide my own music mix for the reception. I would like you to create a wedding mix for my reception. Feel free to be creative in terms of your selection of music – seriously, I don’t need eighty minutes of “Wonderful Tonight” – and use what you know about me to help you in the selection process. Be sure that your CD contains some sort of theme that would, in some way, be appropriate for playing after my wedding. Make sure your liner notes effectively describe the reasoning behind your selections, whether you go song-by-song or discuss the overall selection process. When I grade your project, I will ask myself the following questions:

- Does your CD present a coherent mix to be played following my wedding?
- Is there some governing principle or idea at work in the CD that is appropriate for the occasion?
- Does your essay effectively present this principle or idea?
- Is the essay well-written, using interesting sentence structure, compelling style, and correct grammar?