Friedrich Nietzsche portrays the history of western philosophy after Socrates as the inscription of a particular moral imperative that is complicit with the negation of the body, the ushering in of a nihilistic understanding of history, and the imposition of a consequently “unhealthy” social order stemming from a misinterpretation of the both the particularity and the multiplicity of the human being. As you may glean from the three epigraphs crowning this description he regards the human body and the body politic to be in dynamic interaction, and sees this relationship as constituent to morality, which he understands as the process creating “who [one] is—which means, in what order of rank the inner most drives of his nature stand with respect to each other.” (BGE 6)

Our course, “Nietzsche’s Trilogy” explores the Nietzschean understanding of value creation in its process, namely a particular body’s relation to the power relationships that affect the its own “health” and that of other particular bodies in space and time. The texts under consideration include an unpublished essay from 1873, “On Truth and Lies in a Non-Moral Sense,” three books and five prefaces all written between 1882 and 1886. The primary texts under consideration were selected for three basic reasons: 1) “On Truth and Lies in a Non-Moral Sense” constructs a notion of language as it relates to ethical concerns, 2) Nietzsche understood the period between 1882 and 1886 to be the period of his convalescence and the moment of affirmation for a perspective forged from the experience of the eternal return of the same. The three primary texts from this period introduce three central Nietzschean motifs (the aforementioned eternal return, the will to power, and ressentiment), and 3) Nietzsche considered The Gay Science, Thus Spoke Zarathustra, and Beyond Good and Evil to be cut from a single cloth, clearing the decks for the genealogical polemics that will follow. They thereby represent for Nietzsche an approach to value creation, if not perhaps, a set of values in themselves, and our reading allows us some insight into his critiques of the subject, truth, morality, epistemology, and modernity. These texts also allow us a glimpse into Nietzsche’s engagement with nihilism, and perhaps, some insight for an approach to an ethics in our own time and space.