

GRAND ROUNDS



Thursday, March 19, 2026

Location: Zoom ([RSVP for zoom link](#))

4:30pm- 6:00pm

Medical Virtues and Walt Whitman's Professional Identity Formation

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In the decade between 1863-1873, Walt Whitman experienced some of the most productive and professionally formative years of his life as a government clerk, journalist, personal correspondent, poet and essayist, and wound dresser/medic to thousands of wounded and sick Civil War soldiers. Whitman's poetry, letters and essays from that time demonstrate virtues that resound in the domains of a taxonomy described at the Renaissance School of Medicine in [A Tripartite Taxonomy of Character Strengths & Virtues](#) published in *BMC Medical Education* (2024). Our article outlines three interrelated domains of virtue—**Other-Regarding Virtues (ORVs)**, **Self-Regarding Virtues (SRVs)**, and **Equal-Regarding Virtues (ERVs)**—each essential to the moral and professional development of clinicians.

By placing Whitman's lived experiences and poetic insights in conversation with the tripartite taxonomy, we can examine how the humanities—especially poetry—can help cultivate the virtues essential to the formation of compassionate, resilient, and justice-oriented clinicians. This presentation explores examples of these virtue domains across Whitman's texts, demonstrating how literature can deepen professional self-understanding and support the ongoing work of caring for patients, colleagues, and oneself within the healing professions.



Clinical Associate Professor in the Department of Family, Community, and Population Medicine at the Renaissance School of Medicine at Stony Brook, Dr. Maria Basile, is the Associate Director of the Center for Medical Humanities, Compassionate Care and Bioethics, and Deputy Division Head of Medicine in Society. Award-winning poet, surgeon, and medical educator, Dr. Basile is a dynamic and respected physician leader for more than 3 decades.

She is currently Vice-President of the Board of Trustees of the Walt Whitman Birthplace Association.

Dr. Basile teaches major components of the core pre-clinical curriculum for medical students, contributes to clinical teaching in the clerkship years including transition to clinical clerkship, reflection rounds, engaging in ethics consultation through the Hospital Ethics Committee, and actively mentoring medical and graduate students. She teaches in the Masters' degree program and contributes to the intellectual and scholarly life of the Center. She is an active member of the Empire State Bioethics Consortium and the American Society for Bioethics and Humanities. She co-chairs the Suffolk Delegation to the Medical Society of the State of New York and is a Delegate from New York to the American Medical Association.

To learn more about the **MD with Scholarly Concentrations in Medical Humanities and Ethics track**, the **Master of Arts program**, and **Center for Medical Humanities, Compassionate Care and Bioethics**, please visit stonybrook.edu/bioethics