

# Said Remembered as Scholar, Role Model

By [Josh Hudelson](#)

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Family, friends, and colleagues honored the life of Edward Said yesterday afternoon at a memorial service in St. Paul's Chapel. Numerous speakers, all close to the late University Professor, lauded Said's massive influence on academia, his stalwart and compassionate defense of Palestine, and his flamboyant dress code.

Even University President Bollinger had something to say about Said's fondness for "colors piled one on top of the other," but the seemingly unimportant stories had a point--the diversity of his wardrobe was a reflection of his world view.

"He did not insist that he was right," University Professor and former provost Jonathan Cole said. "But he insisted on the right to have a conversation."

Later, Nobel Prize-winning novelist Nadine Gordimer described Said as "the most eclectic of contemporary intellectuals."

A brief compilation of videotaped interviews captured Said in his own words. "We are all many selves," he said on screen, as audience members smiled and wiped their eyes. For Said, the goal of understanding the myriad sides of an individual seemed "more liberating, even if you never accomplish it."

Class of 1933 professor of English Gauri Viswanathan, a former student of Said's, said, "His teaching opened a window onto the thinking process itself," and likewise, "galvanized a whole generation of students," who demanded that the academic community speak to their individual identities.

In his interviews, Said agreed with the sentiment. "In the end, that's what I am," he said in the video. "I'm a teacher."

Along with many others, Viswanathan extolled Said's demanding work ethic, recalling the time he had chided her for relaxing after she finished her doctoral dissertation.

"There is a lot of work to do," Said said in a video. "This is just the beginning."

Kanti Rai, who tended to Said after he was diagnosed with leukemia, said that Said's focus was always on the work at hand. "He was not afraid of death," Rai said. "He needed more time."

Professor of English Michael Rosenthal guessed that Said worked more hours per day than the average academic. "There was always too much work for Edward to feel sorry for himself," he said.

Rosenthal reiterated Said's pugnacious stance on higher education. "A university that is good for the society in which it was invented will be upsetting," he said. It seems that this attitude never left him--nearing his death, Said imparted a wish to Rosenthal: "Tell them I didn't go down without a fight, and resisted until the very end."

Edward W. Said was born in Jerusalem and studied at Princeton and Harvard Universities before joining the faculty at Columbia in 1963. He is best known for his book *Orientalism*, a historical critique of the European and American conception of "the Orient," that he said triggered the rise of postcolonial studies. He died on Sept. 24, 2003 at the age of 67 and is survived by his wife, daughter, and son.

The ceremony began and closed with organ music, and was interspersed with piano pieces played by a friend of the family, Daniel Barenboim. Said's daughter and son both spoke in their father's memory before a moment of silence near the end of the memorial.