Ever since the important work of Jean Gelman Taylor (1983) and Ann Laura Stoler (1991, 1995) on interracial sexuality appeared, many historians have been preoccupied with the different ways in which colonial societies in the past defined and configured relations of power and subservience on the basis of gender & ethnicity. Why was métissage (miscegenation) in French Indochina around the year 1900 constructed as an urgent social issue among policymakers and civil servants, whereas in French colonial culture in Algeria it hardly figured as political problem? What were the implications of the existence of the category “Eurasians” in British-India’s censuses and conversely, why was it significant that census takers in the Dutch East Indies classified most people of bi-racial descent as “European?”

In this seminar, Frances Gouda intends to address the differential manner in which diverse colonial societies constructed different linkages between (white-skinned male) command and the subordination of white, hybrid and indigenous women. She will also explore the ways in which white women, sometimes voluntarily and at other times reluctantly, came to be positioned as symbolic protectors of the ontological wholeness of the colonial system and defenders of the putative superiority of European culture and morality in colonial Asia during the modern era.