UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA
DEPARTMENT OF GEOGRAPHY

Colloquium / Research Seminar

David Livingstone

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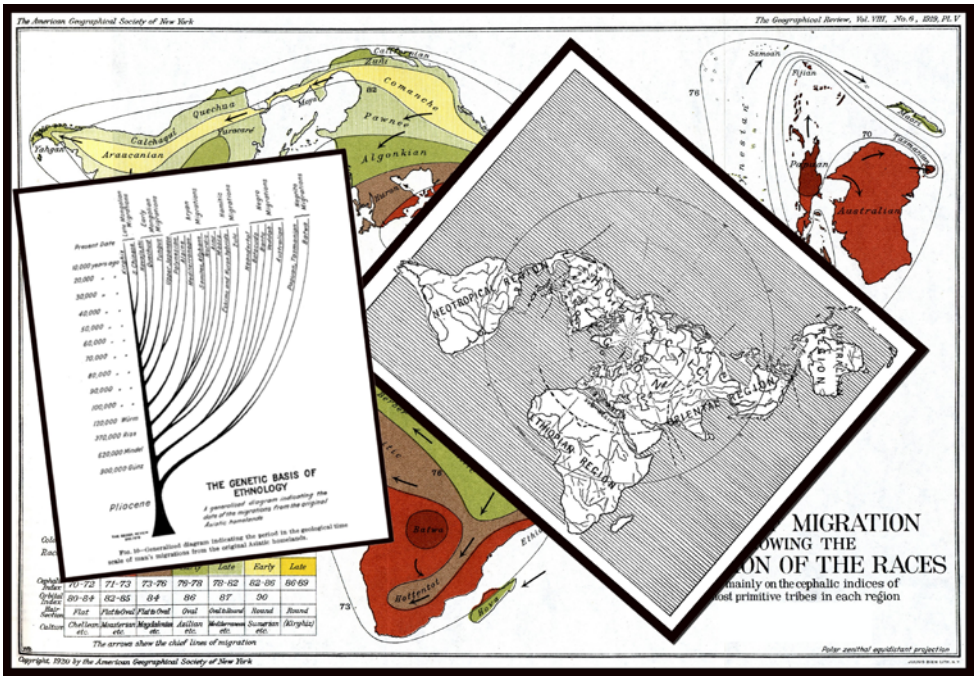
"Changing Climate, Human Evolution, and the Revival of Environmental Determinism**"**



The role of climate change in determining the shape of human evolution, a theme that came to prominence during the early years of the twentieth century, has resurfaced with renewed vigour during the past two or three decades. Here I examine the rise and resurgence of the modern history of the idea that hominid evolutionary pathways have been trigged by climatic causes, to illustrate the continuing vitality of environmental determinism and to highlight some critical continuities between early twentieth-century and contemporary archaeo-anthropology. I begin with William Diller Matthew and the iconic map projection he deployed in his 1915 monograph Climate and Evolution. Subsequently I review how Matthew's cartographic rhetoric was taken up by several writers who emphasised the place of climatic forcing in human evolution with an eye to its relevance for racial politics. I then move to the recent turn to climate change among a number of palaeoanthropologists as the critical component in their explanation of crucial moments in the narrative of human evolutionary history. However much environmental determinism may have been censured during the middle decades of the twentieth century, it is re-emerging with renewed vitality in our own day. While it is often thought to be moribund, it is now securing the approval of some of the most prominent researchers in palaeoanthropology.

Tuesday, 7 February
Geography Room 200
at **12:30 pm**