



## **The Cultural Ecosystem Approach: How Ideas from Evolution and Ecology Can Inform the Study of Cultural Diversity**

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**Biotechnology Building BI 2221 (ITC Conference Room)**

In a world in which inter-continental travel and mass electronic communication are becoming routine for a large proportion of the human population, the study of similarities and differences between groups has considerable academic and practical value. By applying conceptual and methodological tools from the biological sciences it is possible to explore factors that influence standing levels of cultural variation and what cultural forms present in a particular region. In this talk I'll review recent advances in the field of cultural evolutionary studies, including aspects of my dissertation research that test predictions stemming from multilevel selection theory, and discuss how evolutionary theory provides a general framework for organising cultural studies writ large.

Ian MacDonald is a doctoral student working with the Binghamton Religion and Spirituality Project (lead by Prof. David Sloan Wilson in Biological Sciences and Anthropology). His background is in evolutionary psychology, with an emphasis on the behavioral ecology of social behavior and the adaptive nature of culture. His current research focus is on how existential insecurity (i.e. threats to existence) influences the values, beliefs, and practices of individuals at various scales of analysis.

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