

In this talk, I will first introduce Vibrational Sum-Frequency Spectroscopy (VSFS), a nonlinear, ultrafast laser spectroscopy that is capable of selectively detect molecular vibrations on or near surfaces and interfaces. This unique surface-specificity allows us to study absolute orientations of molecules on various surfaces of importance in fields including biophysics, materials science and environmental science. For example, our recent results show that H₂O is intrinsically more surface active than D₂O. This surface-specific isotopic effect results in isotropic fractionation with significant implications in environment chemistry. VSFS has also been used to elucidate how a biomacromolecule aligns itself as well as the surrounding small molecules, such as water, salts, and osmolytes.