Alternatives to NR 220, Natural Resource Ecology and Measurements

Natural Resource Ecology and Measurements, NR 220, is an experiential, place-based, natural resources course focused on the ecology of the Rocky Mountains and measurements that support natural resource management and research. This course integrates knowledge across natural resource disciplines to enable students to understand key ecological and socio-cultural patterns and processes that influence ecosystems. NR 220 challenges students to begin developing their abilities to solve contemporary and complex environmental problems. Because NR 220 is a valuable and unique experiential learning opportunity, it is a required course for students in the Department of Forest & Rangeland Stewardship. Only as a result of exceptional circumstances are students allowed to opt out of NR220 and pursue an alternative. Although they are rarely granted, students may submit a request to complete an alternative course or courses. This document provides guidance for proposing the use of an alternative.

Background

NR 220 is offered within the Warner College of Natural Resources as a four-week summer course at the Colorado State University Mountain Campus. Three sessions are held each summer, each with a favored maximum capacity of 96 students. In 2016, the course will cost about $3,098 (for freshmen & sophomores) for residents and $7,465 (for freshmen & sophomores) for non-residents. The cost for junior and senior residents is about $3,343 and $7,710 for non-residents. Because the cost of the course is greater for junior and senior students and because the course is intended to integrate early in the curriculum, it is highly recommended that the course be taken the summer between the sophomore and junior year. In the first week, instructors teach discipline-specific sessions covering natural resource ecology and components of ecosystems. In the second week, the instructors cover measurements within their disciplines. The third and fourth weeks build on material from the first two weeks and integrate experiential learning across disciplines in five community days where students study the mountain shrub, ponderosa pine, lodgepole pine, spruce fir, and alpine communities. Assignments, plus living and working together for an extended period of time, provide experiences for the students that integrate across disciplines. Leadership skills and outdoor experiences are also provided. The uniqueness of the NR 220 experience cannot be substituted. In rare circumstances, some students are unable to complete NR 220 and need to identify an alternative.

Philosophy Guiding Consideration of an Alternative to NR 220

Students seeking an alternative to NR220 must provide a well-reasoned justification for proposing an alternative. Alternatives that will be considered must include experience in research and field methods, teamwork and team building. An alternative experience must include opportunities for students to learn and practice the basic field skills necessary for a natural resource career. Any alternative must include all topics covered in NR 220, including watershed science, rangeland ecology, forestry, wildlife and human dimensions of natural resources. For more information please consult the NR 220 syllabus for the course’s learning objectives. A student’s interests and career goals should be considered when designing an alternative.

Alternatives must result in college credits that are transferrable to Colorado State University. Questions about how credits would transfer into CSU should be directed to the Registrar’s Office at CSU. Any proposed alternative is subject to review and approval by the head of the Forest and Rangeland Stewardship (FRS) department, with consultation and input from the FRS Curriculum Committee.

Approved by FRS Faculty 3/2016
Example alternatives that may be considered include:

- Students pursuing a degree in Natural Resources Management who plan to establish a career with international work or for non-profit organizations in need of an alternative may complete either the faculty-led field experience in Belize (NR 382B) or Kenya (NR 382A). These are both international field experiences organized by the Department of Human Dimensions of Natural Resources. Field courses offered elsewhere, such as:
  - The School for Field Studies
  - Wild Rockies Field Institute
  - Tatoosh School: Northwest Connections

- Students who transfer from Front Range Community College (FRCC) to CSU to pursue a degree in FRS may use a specific suite of courses from Front Range Community College as an alternative. The combination of NRE 100 Foundations of Forestry, NRE 121 Introduction to Hydrology, and NRE 205 Wildlife and Fisheries Management Principles are an acceptable alternative.

Procedure to Request the Use of an Alternative

The student must write a description of:

- the reasons why NR220 cannot be completed
- their proposed alternative
- the value the alternative has to their education and career
- how the alternative provides them with the knowledge, skills and abilities they would have gained in NR 220

This written proposed justification must be well-reasoned, organized and free of grammar and spelling errors. The proposal should be delivered to the student’s academic advisor for review. Permission to use an alternative to NR 220 is rare. **It is up to the student to demonstrate the need for the substitution, and how the alternative meets the learning outcomes and spirit of NR 220.** Once a request has been approved by the student’s academic advisor, it will go to the Department Head for final approval. The student is then informed of the departmental decision regarding the alternative, and appropriate paperwork will be completed with the Registrar’s Office once the proposed alternative has been completed successfully. (Note: the proposal for an alternative must be submitted for approval prior to the semester the student is supposed to complete NR 220.)

If the student is transferring in the suite of 3 courses from FRCC, it is the student’s responsibility to ensure that an official transcript demonstrating proof of completion of these courses is received by and reviewed by the CSU Registrar’s Office. After the courses are visible on the student’s CSU record, the student MUST contact their academic advisor to ensure that the courses will be used as an alternative for the NR 220 requirement.