I have a lot of interests are not really events so much as concepts that could be discussed in a very gripping way with data. For instance, I find number theory really engaging. I think hearing a lot more about pseudo random number generation or how pi is being numerically approximating would be really gripping for me. I think discussing information theory could be interesting, concepts like entropy are Fast Fourier transform algorithm are fascinating. I guess I am saying one some level I am the kind of person where I am most gripped, when the ideas I am learning help, me understand something more complex and abstract than an applied example.

That however was not really the assignment. So perhaps finding a happy middle ground between a specific event and a broad quantitative topic, could be historical trends. I have two in particular, that I think could be really cool to look at with data. Who (western) history remembers, and how authoritarian ideas (left or right) gain traction.

The first trend is who does western history remember. This would have to be discussed an analyzed with some nuance, but I think there is a lot there. For instance, we could implement, someone being remembered using something like google trends or twitter mentions (which are necessarily biased by location and language). Obviously, this is a massive question, so we would have to limit the scope to just look at a few people we view as “over” and “under remembered” and try to compare them and find out why that is. An example scope could be George Washington, Oliver Cromwell, Napoleon, and Simón Bolívar. These four are similar on many levels, they were all (ethnically European), military leaders, who lead populist revolts, founded republics based on enlightenment ideas, all lived within about 100 years of one another, and were out of power by the time they died. But they are not remembered to the same extent at all. I think most people have never heard of Oliver Cromwell or Simón Bolívar. There is no easy solution that I can think of. One could say it is do to language, Oliver Cromwell spoke English and we forgot him, and Napoleon spoke French but we remember him. One could say it is because of “success”, but Napoleon and Simón Bolívar both died exiles. One could say it is about geographic proximity, but both England and broadly south America are closer to the US than France. I would say it likely has something to do with the US school system. Naturally we teach about George Washington, in public school because that the government wants to self-perpetuate. It can’t be related to fear of Marxism since all Oliver Cromwell, Napoleon, and Simón Bolívar could all be broadly viewed as standing for Marxist principles at some point. I am not sure where to take this specific group of people from here, but I think an engaging way to present this is as a classification task. Could frame the problem as, “what is the maximally separating boundary between being remembered and forgotten, and how can one get on the right side of it?”

The second idea could also be viewed as a classification task, but could be difficult because it is a bit touchy politically. You could get panel data for countries over years, and have class that represents the presence of an authoritarian regime. You could frame the problem not only as finding the maximally separating hyper plane but the point of inflection. Like at what point does some combination of your variable push a country just over to edge into an authoritarian regime?