My goal for this research project is to take a deep-dive into a field that I have minimal experience in: health geography. As a second year MA student, I’m currently looking at PhD programs to apply to for the fall of next year and would like to expand my research experience with this in-class project. Ideally, I’d like to focus my topic on finding correlation between chronic diseases and demographic data. I plan to use the Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) as my primary source of data, and as such I will be focusing my study area in a more rural and/or remote area of the world. Because of this, my project will most likely be data-driven and subject to change. For the time being, however, I have perused the IPUMS DHS data site and plan to center my project around cardiovascular disease and income variation.

My research question is as follows: is there a correlation between rate of cardiovascular disease and income level in low- and middle-income countries? I will narrow this question to focus on a specific region of the world as I locate appropriate data. Cardiovascular disease is the leading cause of death worldwide (World Health Organization, 2018). After a quick survey of the topic (coupled with ‘income’) on the Auraria Library website, the literature appears to be focused upon studying heart disease in the United States. While it’s a commonly discussed and researched topic in the United States, I’m curious to learn more about how cardiovascular disease is thought of and discussed in other parts of the world. Additionally, the literature appears to have a number of studies done on prevention plans in low- and middle-income countries. If there is data available, I am also interested in evaluating these studies and doing an analysis of effectiveness to see if they are having any kind of effect on these communities.

In regard to the data that will be needed for this type of project, I will first need to do a brief literature review to understand better which areas of cardiovascular disease are well-covered and which are not. Second, I’ll need to find adequate and consistent data of a single location encompassing both rate of disease and household income, preferably in at least two different years so that I can do a proper comparison of change over time. Having worked previously with IPUMS, I feel confident in my ability to locate this data and produce a project of worth for our spatial statistics course.

"The Top 10 Causes of Death." World Health Organization. May 24, 2018. https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/the-top-10-causes-of-death.