Post Mortem: Germ Wars

# What Went Right:

Scope:

We started with a very simple idea and were able to make a playable demo of it very quickly. That gave us a lot of time to tweak many aspects of the game. We also used our extra time to add a few features to the game that, while not necessary, definitely improved the game.

Simple Gameplay:

Just moving around, dodging and killing enemies, is a pretty classic concept that’s been around forever (since Pacman). Adding the change color/pill mechanic felt pretty natural, and was pretty intuitive for a lot of players. The simple gameplay also gave us the challenge of how to spice up the experience, which we achieved to some degree.

Constant Variables:

This is a really simple programming thing, but the code used a bunch of global variables/constants which were clearly labeled and easy to change. That let us change things like the player/germ speed, how often germs/pills spawned, point values, etc.. very easily. This also may have meant we implemented fewer new features and spent more time tweaking, but the tweaking was still a good thing.

Play Testing:

In the last week of the project, we did a lot of playtesting. During the week 2 beta testing during class, a lot of people said the game was too difficult, so we dialed it down. Unfortunately, we tossed it down too much, but playtesting over the next week showed us that we should kick it back up.

Art and Sound:

Getting Catherine to do the music and sound effects for our game was absolutely awesome. The theme song is pretty nice and not terrible to listen to repeatedly. The character design for the germs and superman also turned out pretty well. Saturating the game with nice death animations and sound effects also just makes the playing the game feel good.

# What Went Wrong:

File Sharing:

Gamemaker is not a very good program for working cooperatively on code. You can’t export Code and Objects very easily, or generally combine programs if two different people are using it. It was probably worth buying Gamemaker Studio rather than using an older version, because I think that allows better combinations and export options. We also should have put the game on Dropbox or something, whereas we just moved it around on flash drives and email.

Roles:

I was the only one programming, and I think that wasn’t really enough. I implemented all of the features we wanted very quickly initially, but knowing that I had to all the coding and sort out bugs, import content, etc.. made me very reluctant to add new features unnecessarily. I think one of the artists in the group could have done some more coding and/or testing. Someone else finding bugs and tweaking the constant variables would have been a big help, and the final game would probably have had more cool features than it does.

Design:

One of the core design elements of the game, changing colors, was maybe not handled properly. Running into pills to change colors worked out mostly fine, but I think having either less control or more control over the color change could have been really cool. Making it a more central feature of the game by giving the player near complete control over it would have significantly altered the current game design. Giving the player less control over the color change, with somewhat random change or change after eating a certain number of enemies, could also have been an interesting concept. The current implementation is basically fine though.