



Ghost Democracy: the Disappearance of the Vote in the United States

Mark Crispin Miller

What has happened to the vote in the United States? On the one hand, countless individual votes have often vanished, as computerized elections, run by private companies, have enabled ruthless partisans to “disappear” real ballots by the millions, while further boosting their advantage by creating “phantom votes.” Along with other, more traditional forms of disenfranchisement, such sophisticated high-tech fraud has made it possible to steal elections on a scale, and with a subtlety, that would have staggered such pre-digital election thieves as Chicago Mayor Richard J. Daley, or Lyndon Johnson in his early years.

This dire situation ought to be a major story in the media, whose spotlight should shine long and hard on every dubious “victory,” on every case of widespread digital failure or malfunction, and on the small network of private firms that manage most American elections. Only through such coverage can there be an honest national debate about the state of our elections; and yet the press largely refuses ever to discuss this vital issue; which is another way of saying that the vote has – as an issue – also disappeared in the United States.

Why has this happened? How did the civic process fundamental to the workings of democracy – a process that “we” pride ourselves on setting up, or bolstering, in other countries – cease to be a subject of sustained public discussion? More specifically, how did all earnest efforts to encourage such discussion come to be regarded, and derided, as “conspiracy theory”? Mark Crispin Miller will suggest some answers to these all-important questions.

Mark Crispin Miller is a Professor of Media, Culture and Communication at New York University. He also has a popular blog – News From Underground, markcrispinmiller.com – that discusses issues related to the media and public affairs.

Date:	Thursday, November 18, 2010, 8:00 pm. (Refreshments and networking at 7:30 pm.)
Place:	Small Auditorium, Room CS 105 Computer Science Building, Princeton University Olden St. between William St. and Prospect Ave. +40.3502,-74.6522
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On-line info:	http://www.acm.org/chapters/princetonacm

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A pre-meeting dinner with the speaker is held at 6:00 p.m. at Ruby Tuesday’s Restaurant on Route 1. Please send email to princetonacm@acm.org in advance if you plan to attend the dinner.

