For this class, I use **“queerness”** in two connected ways. First, it is an umbrella for lives and practices outside cis-heteronormative rules. Second, it is a reading lens: it asks me not to freeze identity into fixed boxes, because words and power keep shifting those boxes. Bronski’s introduction maps this shift—from “sodomite” and “crimes against nature,” to “homosexual,” and later to reclaimed words like “fag,” “dyke,” and especially “queer.” This makes me careful not to treat any single label as timeless truth (Bronski 9–11; 14–16). At the same time, Godbeer reminds us that early New England’s official discourse did not think in terms of “orientation,” so we should not project modern identities backward (Godbeer 81–82). This double view—language history plus context—lets me use “queer” both as an inclusive umbrella and as a flexible method for reading past materials (Bronski 13–16).

I define **“dissent”** as **intentional, public criticism** of prevailing norms or authority. Collins and Skover help here. They show why **intention** matters: calling something “accidental dissent” sounds odd, and audiences or regulators cannot replace the speaker’s purpose by themselves (Collins and Skover 8–12). But intention alone is not enough; dissent must also be **critical** (it has to oppose something) and **public** enough to carry risk and address others (Collins and Skover 11–12; 19–25). I find their boundary cases useful: a private diary usually fails the public test; an anonymous leaflet may still count because it speaks outward; and in repressive regimes, even semi-hidden criticism might be “public enough” because openness can be suicidal (Collins and Skover 23–26).

As a case of **queer dissent**, I point to **Queer Nation** in the early 1990s. Activists **reclaimed “queer”** and took to the streets during the AIDS crisis, confronting heteronormative culture and state neglect—clear **intention**, **criticism**, and very **public** (Bronski 14–16). To me, this is language politics plus street politics: changing the word changed what could be said and who could speak. Bronski notes how quickly “queer” moved into mainstream titles like *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy*, which shows dissent can also work by renaming common sense (Bronski 15–16). At the same time, contemporary voices still disagree about the term: for some it is empowering and inclusive; for others it carries pain. That tension is exactly why “queer” helps our class as both identity and lens (Cheves and López).  In short, I will use **queerness** as a historically aware umbrella and a reading method, and **dissent** as intentional, public criticism—then test case studies like Queer Nation against that triad.